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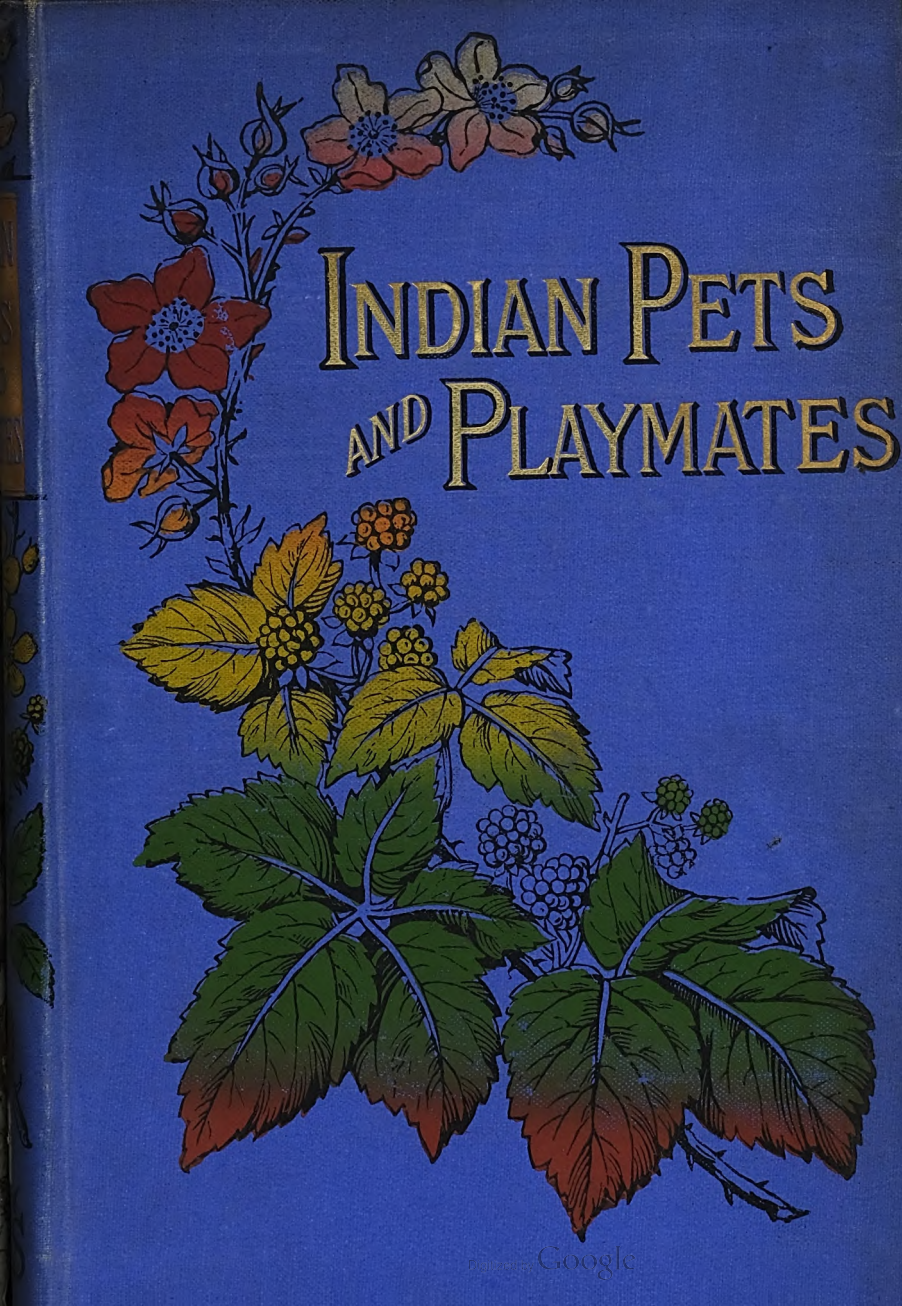

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INDIAN PETS AND PLAYMATES

BY

EDITH E. CUTHELL

Author of 'Little Nellie's Days in India' 'In the Mutiny Days etc. etc.

London

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

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INDIAN PETS.

CHAPTER I.

A PERILOUS PICNIC.

FOUR months before his birthday came round, Reggy had chosen his birthday treat. Many children do that, looking forward to their birthdays as soon as the excitement of Christmas and of the Christmas presents is over, and counting the progress of the year by the approach of the season which brings this birthday.

But Reggy could do a thing which not all children could do. He might choose his birthday treat, and might count, with the utmost certainty, on a fine day for it. For Reggy was living in India, and he had chosen a picnic for his birthday treat.

The long, pleasant, cold weather of Northern

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India had set in, and was unlikely to be disturbed till nearly April by anything more than a few showers at Christmas-time. The sun shone daily unclouded, and fierce only for an hour or two at noon, while the afternoons were cool and pleasant, and the moonlight nights crisp, with a faint suspicion of frost.

All the country round was waking up after the long and hot season, when all vestige of greenness seems burnt up out of the sun-baked plains. The natives were tilling the fields; the trees put forth new leaves; and the carefully watered gardens were ablaze with flowers, while delicious fresh vegetables and fruits came up to table.

No wonder Reggy, after having been cooped up so much in the house for the long scorching hours of the hot weather, revelled in being out of doors, and chose a picnic as his birthday treat.

'Let's go somewhere for breakfast, mother, and stay there all day, and have lunch there, all in the open, and come back again in the cool of the evening. Let's go a good way off, too—out somewhere beyond the bungalows and the parade ground. I'm so tired of always walking and driving about the Mall!'

Reggy's mother agreed, of course. He was a great pet, for all his brothers and sisters were away at school in England, and now that her youngest darling was five years old, she thought with a sigh how short a time she could still hope to keep him with her. European children cannot

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grow healthy and strong in the Indian climate, but have to be sent home to England, when they are hardly more than mere baby children.

As the great day drew near, Reggy began to enlarge upon his picnic scheme.

'Bob wrote last mail that grandmamma had given him a children's party on his birthday when he was eight. Can't I have a children's picnic?'

Mrs. Langstone considered for a few minutes. There were not many children at Punkahpore—the place where Reggy was living—who were quite old enough to invite. There were plenty of English babies, but no big boys and girls at all (they were all at home in England), and hardly any small girls and boys of Reggy's age.

'We will ask all we can, my boy. The two Hunters, and Maggie Smith, and the two oldest Fairbairns. Then there are the children of the newly arrived Colonel in the 84th Regiment.'

'Oh, yes! I've seen them at the band-stand! Do ask them. They don't know anything about India,—they will enjoy it so!'

The invitation was written, and not long after a groom, with bare legs and feet, and a black cloth tunic and white turban, appeared in the verandah, with the answer stuck in the folds of his turban to keep it clean. It ran :—

'DEAR MRS. LANGSTONE—I am suffering from an attack of fever, and shall not be able to accept your kind invitation for Tuesday. But Guy and Ida will be delighted to come, but say they hope

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you will not mind their bringing Ben, as they do not like to leave him.—Yours sincerely,

'EMILY YATES.'

'Ida and Guy! What pretty names!' cried Reggy. 'And Ben. That makes three; but I thought you said Colonel Yates had only two children. Well, never mind, the more the merrier. Only let's have cake enough, mother!'

No fear of that. As soon as the eventful birthday dawned, the whole Langstone household was *en fête*. The servants had decorated the gateway and the arches of the verandah with garlands of yellow marigolds, hanging by their stalks—a style of adornment they considered very elegant. When Reggy was at breakfast they all trooped in to offer him presents—a long procession of dark faces and snowy turbans and rustling white calico robes. The fat old cook waddled up with an enormous cake, elaborately decorated in pink and white sugar, which he had prepared. The other servants brought little trays of native sweetmeats, which looked a great deal nicer than they tasted, and little piles of queer dried fruits and spices. The gardeners approached, bearing in their hands stiff nosegays of flowers without any green, which they presented with low obeisance, touching their foreheads with their hands. Reggy *sahib's burra din* (big day), they all called it. After all, it was to be a tea-picnic. It was less grand than a dinner-picnic, of course, but it could not be helped.

'If you're a soldier, and a soldier's son, you've

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got to obey orders,' remarked Reggy; 'and it's no use grumbling. Of course it is a bore that the general had fixed a big parade just on my birthday morning; but he didn't know it was my birthday. And as for having our dinner-picnic with father busy on parade, and not able to be there—why, it would not be half a birthday picnic without him!'

So pleasure had to give way to duty.

Early in the afternoon of the great day several carriages might have been seen wending their way along the dusty road which led out of the European part of the town towards the old ruined palace of Dilkusha. There were large open landaus, drawn by pairs of horses, and driven by a white-robed coachman, with two similarly dressed grooms clinging to the back, behind the hood. There were officers in dogcarts; ladies driving pony-carriages; ladies and gentlemen riding, with grooms running behind them.

The way lay between rows of trees which bordered the road over a flat plain. Every now and then slow creaking bullock carts, heavily laden, had to move on one side into the dust to let the carriages pass; or a flock of skinny goats, nibbling at every dry stick and leaf they could find; or a jingling canopied little country cart, packed with natives, and drawn by a worn-out little pony, had to be shouted at to make way.

Through a ruined gateway, with creepers twining over the crumbling stone posts, the party

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entered what had once been the king's garden. Here, before he had been deposed for his bad behaviour, the Rajah of Punkahpore had been wont to come out from the city, to rest and enjoy himself during the hot weather; but all the grounds now were a tangled wilderness. The paths, the drives, the terraces were all overgrown, the shrubs unpruned, and the garden given over to the parrots and jays, crows and owls, who revelled in it. The palace itself, a large, square, many-windowed, white building, with a tower at each corner, was very dilapidated too, and had not been lived in for years.

Under a large mango tree on a stone terrace the servants had spread the tea-table, and ranged chairs round a square carpet. That was their idea of a picnic. But then, in the plains of India, there is no nice greensward to sit upon—everything is sun-baked mud or dust. Reggy's big cake stood proudly in the middle of the table, and he felt quite assured on looking at it that it would be large enough. Besides, it was flanked by a perfect array of small dishes, sweetmeats, cakes, pastry, and toffy of various kinds, especially the cocoa-nut toffy, which the native cooks make so well.

Mrs. Langstone had done shaking hands with all her guests, when Reggy nudged her elbow.

'Mother, I don't see those new children.'

And, indeed, the Yates' party had not yet arrived. But before tea had been well begun, or Reggy, with a mighty effort, had succeeded in plant-

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ing the knife into the cake, the sound of wheels was heard, and two little figures were seen approaching.

A small boy in a white sailor suit led by the hand a smaller girl in a white smock frock and big bonnet. Mrs. Langstone went forward to meet them.

'How do you do?' she said. 'You are Guy, I suppose?'

The little boy took off his hat politely.

'Quite well, thank you. Yes, I'm Guy, and this is Ida.'

Mrs. Langstone kissed Ida.

'I'm sorry you have not brought your little brother, after all,' she said; 'we quite expected him.'

'Guy's my bwovver!' lisped the little maid, pointing to him.

'Oh yes! but I meant the other little boy, the youngest—Ben—isn't that his name?'

Four large dark eyes were fixed upon her for a few moments with a look of intense surprise. Then two little mouths opened wide and emitted peals of laughter.

'Oh! we've brought Ben all right! No fear of our leaving him when you said he might come. And we call him our little brother sometimes—but he isn't really. Here, Ben, Ben, come here!'

And from behind the little pair came a small white dog, with one black ear, and a black tip to his tail, which he wagged civilly in response to Mrs. Langstone's greeting. She laughed heartily too at her mistake, and so did Reggy, and the

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rest of the party. But Reggy insisted on treating Ben quite like one of the guests, and gave him a large piece of cake.

'Would 'ou like to hear how Ben was founded?' asked little Ida presently, during a lull in the conversation.

'Oh yes!' said everybody, and even the grown-up people stopped talking, while the little maid held forth.

'When we came off the big ship—when we'd got to India—we got into a puffer-train, and we comed a long, long, long way in the puffer-train. Sometimes we went to sleep all night in the train. And once we stopped at a house, and waited there all day for another train.'

'She means a hotel,' put in Guy.

'And Ben was there, sitting about in the verandah. He was a lost dog.'

'Father said Ben's master had gone back to England, and had lost him at the hotel on his journey,' put in Guy again.

'Don't int'rupt, Guy,' said Ida severely. 'And we gave Ben some of our beck'ast—some b'ead and milk; and Ben loved us, and stayed with us; and father let us take him with us in the puffer-train; and he's been with us always, ever since.'

'That was why we asked to bring him to-day,' added Guy triumphantly.

'Quite a romantic story!' said Mrs. Langstone. 'He's a nice little dog, and we are all very pleased to make his acquaintance. And now, children, if

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every one has eaten enough, don't you think you'd better have a game at something ?'

Children in India are generally tired and languid, and unused to romping about like their healthier brothers and sisters at home. At Mrs. Langstone's suggestion of a game they all got up from table, and an army of bearers and ayahs appeared on the scene to take charge of them. They all stood about undecidedly, no one caring to begin anything. This did not do for Guy, who took the lead.

'Look here!' he said, 'this is a jolly place for hide-and-seek—here in this old house. Come along!'

His example was magical. In a few moments the servants had been sent back to where the carriages were standing, and the game had begun. The elders went off to play tennis on a paved part of the terrace which had been marked out, and Mrs. Langstone and the other ladies sat in chairs and looked on.

The Indian twilight is short. Already the sun was sinking low across the plain in a sky of rich saffron. In a very short time it would be dusk. There were sounds of horses being put to.

'Let's make haste—one turn more!' cried Guy. 'Ida and I will hide this time!'

'It won't be fair!' cried Dick Hunter. 'Your little dog Ben is always at your heels. He'll show us where you are directly.'

'Poor Ben! Very well, we'll tie him up in the carriage ; then he won't bother us' said Guy.

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This done, he and Ida crept away from the rest of the group.

'I've a splendid place to hide in, Ida,' whispered her brother mysteriously. 'They will never find us there.'

He led the way to a corner of the verandah of the old palace. There was a little door; he opened it. It led into a little corner room, whence went up a winding stone stair. The children climbed up it. On, on they went, round and round, till Ida felt nearly giddy, and clung to Guy for support. Then a cold breeze. They had reached the top, and stood on the flat roof of the house.

The children peered cautiously over the parapet, and Guy, putting his hand before his mouth, gave a whoop—whoop, which might have come from anywhere.

'Squat down and hide, Ida,' he whispered, 'and keep quiet.'

The sun had set, and it was growing dusk. A murmur of voices came up from below. Carriages were heard rolling off, and now and then the voices of their playmates calling. But no one seemed to have an idea where Guy and Ida were; no one climbed up the stairs to look for them.

It grew chilly. Ida shivered.

'I wish they'd come. It's getting cold up here.'

'I told you it was a scrumptious place! They'll never think of looking here.'

They waited a little longer. Still no one came up the stairs—no one burst upon them with an 'I spy.

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'I don't like it up here,' said Ida again. 'I believe they have stopped looking. Let's go down.'

'How stupid of them! It *is* a good place! But if you're cold, we'll go down, Ida, and give up.'

'How dark it is!' cried Ida, as they approached the stairs. 'It's got quite night. I can't see where to step!'

And, indeed, it was quite dark inside the turret. Ida was very frightened, and it was only by means of coaxing and helping her that Guy managed to get her down.

The verandah was almost as dim, and the many trees cast dark, inky shades all over the terrace. All was silent and deserted, and no one was to be seen. The children looked at each other, and then Ida burst into tears.

'They're all goned home and left us!'

'Oh no! they can't have done that!' cried Guy. 'You stay here, and I'll run and see.'

Off he ran into the darkness, shouting. Ida held her breath to listen for some answering sound. But presently he returned disconsolate.

'I don't see not a person, and the carriages are all gone.'

'They've forgotten us,' sobbed Ida.

'Even Ben!' added Guy. 'I did not think Ben would have gone away without us!'

'I want to go home to mother,' sobbed Ida.

'Mother will wonder what has become of us, and she has a bad headache; I am sorry to worry her,' said Guy, almost to himself.

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'Let us run home,' suggested Ida.

'It's too far, and I don't know the way at all. And it's dark.'

'I don't like being here in the dark. I'm afraid. There is snakes in India what bite—and hy—hy—animals what laugh—ah! what's that?' and with a gasp of terror the poor little child clung closer to her brother and cowered into the farthest corner of the verandah, as an unearthly, blood-curdling noise broke on their ears.

It was an alternate laughing and howling, unlike any beast or human voice they had ever heard. There was a moment's silence, and then the horrible wail was answered, and close by them now, from a bush in the garden.

Ida shrieked aloud.

'It's coming to eat us! I know it is!'

'It's only a jackal, Ida; don't be so frightened. See, I'll make a great noise and frighten it away. Father says jackals are great cowards.'

And he marched boldly, stamping, towards the end of the verandah.

'Shoo! shoo! shoo!' he shouted; then his voice quavered a little.

'Let's go back to our place at the top of the stairs, Ida; it's so very dark down here. I *wish* some one would come and find us!'

Feeling and groping they crept their way back again, and sat down on the top step to wait. Ida felt more comforted.

'I don't think jackals can walk up stairs,' she said, and leant her head on Guy's shoulder.

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They sat still for so long after this that Ida, who was very tired with her romps and her exciting day, fell asleep. The jackals howled in the garden again, and an owl in the mango tree said, 'Crrk! crrk!' But she did not notice them, and Guy began to feel rather sleepy too.

'I wish—I wish some one would come and find us,' he said to himself. 'Supposing we have to stay here all night!'

A shudder crossed him. It was a terrible idea, and already he felt cold and hungry and frightened. He dare not move or even clasp his hand for fear of waking Ida. But if ever a heartfelt prayer went up to heaven it was Guy's, as he gazed through the opening of the turret doorway at the myriads of shining stars in the dark blue vault and murmured, 'Please God, send some one to find us!'

Something flapped in at the doorway—something dark. It was a large bat, and Guy was so frightened that he had to hold his breath and bite his lips to prevent screaming. But Ida never stirred. She was so tired. Next a sound came from below. Pitter, patter—pitter, patter.

Guy's heart stood still with horror. Was it indeed a jackal coming upstairs?

It came nearer and nearer. Guy could hear it breathing. Then something cold touched his hand. Was it a snake that had slid down the wall? But in another minute something warm, a tongue, was licking Guy's hand; yes, and his face too.

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'Bow! wow! wow!'

Ida woke with a start, and had her face licked too.

'Oh, Guy, it's Ben! Ben's come and found us!'

'Bow! wow! wow!' barked Ben, and executed a wild war-dance round the children, and then fell to jumping on them and barking again.

Presently there were voices heard below.

'Ida! Guy! where are you?'

'Here! Here!' they both cried at once, and Ben added a bark.

A moment later, and Mrs. Langstone and several other ladies and gentlemen hurried up the stairs.

'You poor children! How frightened you must have been to find yourselves left behind!' she exclaimed, as she caught them up in her arms and kissed them.

Major Hunter carried Ida down the stairs to the carriage. Guy followed, holding Mrs. Langstone's hand.

'Oh, there you are, all right!' cried Reggy, who was waiting in the carriage. 'We couldn't find you anywhere, and mamma thought you had gone back with Mrs. Hunter, and Mrs. Hunter thought you were with us.'

'But Ben found us,' said Ida.

'Yes; but for Ben's fidgeting and whining we should probably not have discovered at all that you were left behind,' said Mrs. Langstone. 'When we let him out of the carriage, he ran straight back, and guided us to you.'

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'Dear bwovver Ben! I'm glad we brought you,' murmured Ida; and she laid her head on Ben's white coat and went fast asleep for all the drive home. When she awoke she was in the verandah of her own bungalow, and in her mother's arms, who straightway carried her off to bed.

'I *was* very frightened, too, mother,' said Guy, as Mrs. Yates came in to hear him say his prayers, as she always did, 'though I tried to be brave because of Ida. But aren't you thankful Ben found us?'

'My dear little son,' said his mother, 'I *am* thankful, but not only to Ben, though he is a clever, faithful doggie. Remember, there is One to "whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." It was He, Guy, who was watching over you with His heavenly love, and who, the great Maker of all things, put that wonderful knowledge, which we call instinct, into Ben's heart, to seek for you when you were lost.'

'I asked Him, mother,' said Guy. 'I did ask Him, oh, so much! to send some one to find us. And He did, you see!'

'Well, never forget it all your life long, my son, for God has done more for you than this. He sent Ben to find your body, but when your soul was lost, cut off by its naughtiness from Him, whom did He send? Can you remember any verse in the Bible that tells us?'

Guy thought a moment, and then he answered, '"The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."'

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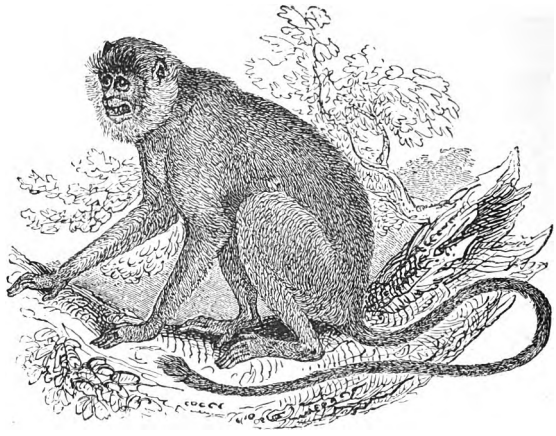

CHAPTER II.

THE MONKEY'S REVENGE.

INDIA is the paradise of monkeys, and if Methoo had only known it, he would have been very grateful that his lot was cast in that country. He might have been born in the Zoological Gardens, and spent his life in a cage, being stared at, and would probably have died early of consumption, the result of the cold climate. He might have been born in Italy, and dragged out a weary existence chained to the top of a hurdy-gurdy, clad in a little scarlet coat. Instead of which he was born in India, and in India monkeys are semi-sacred animals. Nobody molests or destroys them.

Methoo's parents led a free and happy vagabond life in the long bazaar of mud huts of a native city.

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They roamed in and out of the houses, pilfered the dishes and the baskets, held high revels and gymnastic performances on the roofs, whence they would even sweep down on the passers-by and snatch some edibles out of their hands. The lazy, easy-going natives suffered many things at their hands, till at last the monkeys victimised them to such an extent that their lives became a burden. The bazaar of the city of Guramghur threatened to become the abode of the monkeys, in which the human beings were only allowed a precarious existence. Something had to be done. But the monkeys were not to be killed or hurt. So they were condemned to transportation for life. The spot chosen for their penal settlement was a pleasant grove, some seventeen miles from Guramghur, where you would imagine there was everything that monkey heart could wish for. Mangoes to steal in the trees, grain crops to pilfer in the fields round. But no! the town-bred monkeys of Guramghur declined to put up with the dulness of rural retirement. Talk of transportation for life! In less than a month they were back again in their city haunts, as audacious as ever, and throve exceedingly after their little country excursion.

So much for Methoo's parents. His grandparents had had even a better time of it in their day. Outside Guramghur was a shady grove, in which stood the little mud hut of an Indian hermit. This good man devoted his life to the feeding of monkeys, imagining, in his delusion, that he was

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thus propitiating in one of their many forms the countless deities of the Hindoo religion. Morning and evening, in burning hot weathers and drenching monsoons, a blast on a cow's horn would gather his flock around him. Big brown grandpapa monkeys, somewhat grey-bearded and uncertain in temper; frisky, athletic young monkeys, fresh from incredible acrobatic performances in the branches, and every conceivable kind of mischievous trick; mamma monkeys, carrying their little ones holding on round their bodies, head downwards; dear little baby monkeys, with charming little human-like, pathetic faces. All these lived in clover in the sacred monkey grove at Guramghur.

But poor Methoo's fate was not such a happy one, though it might have been worse. He was quite a baby when one of Mrs. Smith's servants caught him on the roof of his house in the bazaar, and sold him to his mistress for a pet. Mrs. Smith had no children of her own with her in India. They were far away over the sea at school in England; and her life in the great, dim bungalow, which she called home, with Mr. Smith away at his office all day, was often very lonely and dull. So Mrs. Smith collected pets round her. Big dogs and little dogs; parrots, doves, and a cockatoo; graceful, white paddy birds, standing tall on long legs; little fluffy budgiars, love-birds, and Java sparrows, the latter all a happy family in a big cage. Outside, in the garden, was tethered a

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pretty spotted deer, who fed out of his mistress's hand; and then last, but not least, Methoo appeared on the scene, and was established in a box under a tree, to which he was fastened by a long chain.

It was captivity, no doubt, but Methoo was a very lucky prisoner. He was first favourite of all the pets for the present. He could roam and clamber about among the branches of his tree, or hide in his box, if he felt so inclined. The servants, always hovering round idle, fed him with tit-bits; and Mrs. Smith, morning and evening, came out of the verandah to talk to him when it was cool, and let him sit on her shoulder, and clamber up her dress, and chatter in her ear. Methoo, as she called him (which means in Hindoostanee 'sweet'), was an engaging little brown beast, and his queer little tricks and antics made his mistress very fond of him.

But the hot weather came on apace. The trees grew bare, as they do in the Indian spring, and hot blasts blew through the garden. In the bungalow there was a great packing-up. Mrs. Smith was flying from the approaching heat, and was going up to the mountains.

Her heart was sore at leaving her pets. But Mr. Smith told her how impossible it would be for her to travel about with a perfect menagerie; so she began to make a selection. Finally, after many hesitations, the beautiful purple-hearted green parrakeet, the large retriever Sambo, the fox-

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terrier Nip, and the monkey Methoo were chosen to accompany her.

When he was first installed in the verandah of the little cottage Mrs. Smith had taken on a wooded hillside on the Himalayas, poor Methoo shivered and shook with the cold and the change of the climate. But as he got gradually used to it, his little box was placed under a gnarled trunk of an old ilex on the terrace, and he gambolled about among the branches, which were delicately fringed with drooping ferns.

There were no brown monkeys in the native village here among the mountains. Methoo's relations were so totally different to any he had ever set eyes on before, that they rather alarmed him when they first paid him a visit. It was in the very early morning, when the sun had not long risen, and the great snow-peaks which Methoo could see from the top of his ilex-tree stood out in a sharp-cut circle against the clear sky, when—crash! crash! thud!—through the branches of the forest, on to the top of the roof of the cottage, bounded a troop of great white *lungur* monkeys. They looked like a company of grey-bearded old men; but they were much shyer than Methoo's species, and the appearance of a servant drove them back into the recesses of the forest.

Mrs. Smith was not long alone in her mountain home. She soon got a new pet; Methoo was deposed, and relegated to the position of second favourite. And who do you think the new pet was?

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Why, a pale, big-eyed little girl, sickly and wan with the terrible heat of the plains, and whom kind Mrs. Smith had asked up to stay with her in the hills. But before very long no one would have recognised Rosie, so strong and well did she become in the bracing mountain air, carrying her name written on her cheeks. The little cottage and the little terrace garden re-echoed all day to her shouts and her laughter; and Mrs. Smith smiled to see her so happy.

But Methoo did not like Rose much. Methoo was jealous. He did not really like children at all, monkeys seldom do; and, in addition, he perfectly understood that Rosie had supplanted him in his mistress's eyes. Rosie tried to make friends with him; but he would not yield to her coaxing and petting, as did Sambo and Nip. He would not feed out of her hand as did the parrakeet. No, he growled and snarled and made ugly faces at her, till Rose grew quite frightened at him, and kept at a respectful distance from his box. Matters grew from bad to worse. An open war was declared between Rose and Methoo. The latter would sulk in his box or behind the ilex trunk, and then, when the little girl came unwarily within distance of his chain, would spring out upon her, and frighten her, and claw and tear her dress, grinning at her all the while in the most alarming way.

Rose, who had grown mischievous now she felt well and strong again, retaliated. She would pelt

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Methoo with stones, and tantalise him by holding nice bits to eat just out of his reach, and then give them to Sambo; she would (oh, crowning act of teasing and most disliked by all monkeys!) stand just where he could not catch her, and laugh at him till Methoo felt mad with rage, for he knew as well as a human being when he was being laughed at.

It was very spiteful of Rosie to tease a dumb animal in this way. She must have forgotten that they all are God's creatures, created by Him, and that 'one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father;' that Christ has bade us 'consider the ravens; God feedeth them.' And there is a little verse that tells us,—

> 'He prayeth best who loveth best
> All things both great and small,
> For the great God who made the rest,
> *He* made and loveth all.'

But she paid for it dearly, as you will see.

One day Rosie was to go to a picnic on a neighbouring hill-top. She was to meet Mrs. Smith, who had to go out to lunch first, at four o'clock at a place where two cross paths met.

'Mind you're not late,' were Mrs. Smith's words; 'as, if you are not punctual, we shall not reach the picnic place in time for tea.'

Rose promised, and then to make the time pass quicker walked up and down on the terrace after lunch, longing for it to be time to go. Suddenly she heard her ayah calling her to come and

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get ready, and off she ran. But Methoo, who had been watching her, gave a spring as she passed close to his ilex tree. Two little sharp claws fastened themselves firmly in her clean white sleeve, two others into her best sash ; and Methoo sat grinning and chuckling, his little face close to hers.

Rose was a prisoner, held fast by the monkey.

Rose screamed and shouted ; but the servants did not hear her, and Methoo only gabbled and grinned.

Four o'clock struck from the police-station gong in the bazaar below ; and frantic in her despair at being too late, Rose wrenched the monkey off her.

Crrr—crrr—crrr ! went the sleeve of her new dress, rent from top to bottom by Methoo's claws. Crrr—crrr—crrr ! that was Rosie's best sash torn in half !

And Methoo himself bounded joyfully up the ilex trunk, and sat jabbering on a bough above, as if he fully realized the mischief he had done.

Rose missed her picnic, for even had she not been too late to meet Mrs. Smith, how could she go with her best frock and sash all in tatters ? It was a bitter disappointment to her. Picnics did not come every day. But it was a lesson to her, and never again did she tease Methoo.

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CHAPTER III.

STALKED BY A TIGER.

YEARS ago there was great joy in an Indian bungalow among some English children when father came back from the war. He had been away for months, over the sea, fighting with his men against the Chinese, that odd country of odd people, which the children fancied must be something like the pictures on the willow-pattern plates. While he was away came letters full of sad battles, of attacks on strong forts, of sailing up broad rivers, and of fighting the enemy in swamps and jungles, and, at last, of a great victory, and of the entry of the victorious troops into the capital

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and the very palace of the Chinese emperor. And the children, away in India, playing in the verandah or under the punkah, shouted 'Hooray!' and sang 'God save the Queen'; and mother cried again, but this time tears of joy, for the war was over, and father was coming come.

He came, with colours flying and bands playing. Proudly the regiment marched in, and all the English population turned out to greet it. In the bungalow he found the children, all much grown, and all clamorous for stories of his adventures, and for a sight of all the curious things he said he had brought back with him.

What an unpacking there was! There were presents for every one, and some such funny ones —flat Chinese hats and embroidered coats and dresses, and jewels for mother; queer figures and ornaments and musical instruments for the children. What a beating of gongs sounded through the bungalow!

And, at last, when every one was crowded up with presents, father announced that there was yet another to come. It was not in a box, that was certain, for all the boxes were empty. What was it? What could it be?

Then the bearer who had been with father to China entered, carrying something in his arms.

It was the loveliest little dog you ever saw, like a black ball of silky wool, except that its paws and waistcoat and the linings of its long ears were all of tan colour. Its bushy tail curled three times

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round, and its tiny face was very flat, with hardly any nose, large, protruding eyes, and a little bit of red tongue hanging out. It was a Chinese pug, and its name was Chow.

Then every one asked at once where father got it.

It had been the pet of one of the ladies in the Emperor of China's palace at Pekin. She called it her sleeve dog, and used it to warm her hands, carrying it in her wide sleeves. But one day, when the English soldiers entered the palace, she fled in terror, and left her little dog behind. Father found it, and picked it up.

The children took care, however, that Chow should not miss the love and the pettings of his Chinese mistress. They postively quarrelled as to who should make the most of him. And Chow fully repaid their affection, for he was a sweet-tempered, faithful little beast, and father and mother sometimes would laughingly call him their youngest child.

When the hot weather came, and the furnace-like winds blew, Chow began to feel the heat very much. He could not get rid of his long, thick coat, and wear thin muslin dresses, like the children. So he was not sorry when the family moved up to the hills, where the climate is cooler. He enjoyed himself here in the walks and drives, among the mountains, through the green valleys and the thick forests.

One day father and mother went out for a drive alone, taking only the 'youngest child' with them,

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which was rather a good thing, as you will hear. After a while, the road ran up a valley almost covered with deep thick jungle. Down a narrow rocky ravine on one side, in the rainy season, a torrent flowed, and mother thought it a likely place for ferns, of which she was very fond. So, leaving the carriage in the road, she and father started on their fern-hunting walk, followed of course by Chow. They went some distance up the gully, and laded themselves with many beautiful specimens, which father dug out of the rocks with a knife he carried in his hand.

Then, as the sun had set behind the hills, and it was beginning to get dusk in the valley, they turned back to the carriage.

Suddenly there was a great commotion in the jungle immediately on their left. The parrots shrieked, the minas called, the pheasants flew away with an excited whir, and Chow, who had been following them, ran up and tried to hide himself under his mistress's skirt.

On looking round to see the cause of all the disturbance, imagine father's horror at perceiving, close by, on the bank above the narrow path, a huge tiger!

Step by step, as they walked, the long, lithe, yellow beast followed, his fierce eye fixed on poor little Chow, meditating a spring.

'Walk as fast as you can,' whispered father to mother, 'but, for your life, don't run!' fearing she should excite the tiger to make a leap.

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Mother tried to do as she was bid, but Chow, fully aware that he was the object of the tiger's stalk, and, terrified accordingly, crept alone so close to his mistress's feet that she could hardly move.

It was an awful walk. The path along which they had come seemed interminably long. Father was unarmed, save for the fern-knife he carried in his hand, and which was, of course, useless against such an enemy.

Mother, hampered by the dog, did not dare to stoop and pick him up, lest she should draw down the tiger on herself.

And still the lord of the jungle stole on stealthily along the bank, abreast of, and towering above, them.

But even the longest lane has an end, and this one had too. How can I describe their delight when they saw the end of the path, and heard the jingle of the horse's harness, and the voices of the servants talking?

The tiger heard it too, and, baulked for once of his prey, slunk away back into the jungle, not daring to face the sight and sound of men.

They were safe, and mother's first act was to catch up her little Chow and hug him joyfully. All the same, after this, when father and mother went fern-hunting again in the jungle, much as they loved the dog, they took care not to take him with them, lest he again should be stalked by a tiger.

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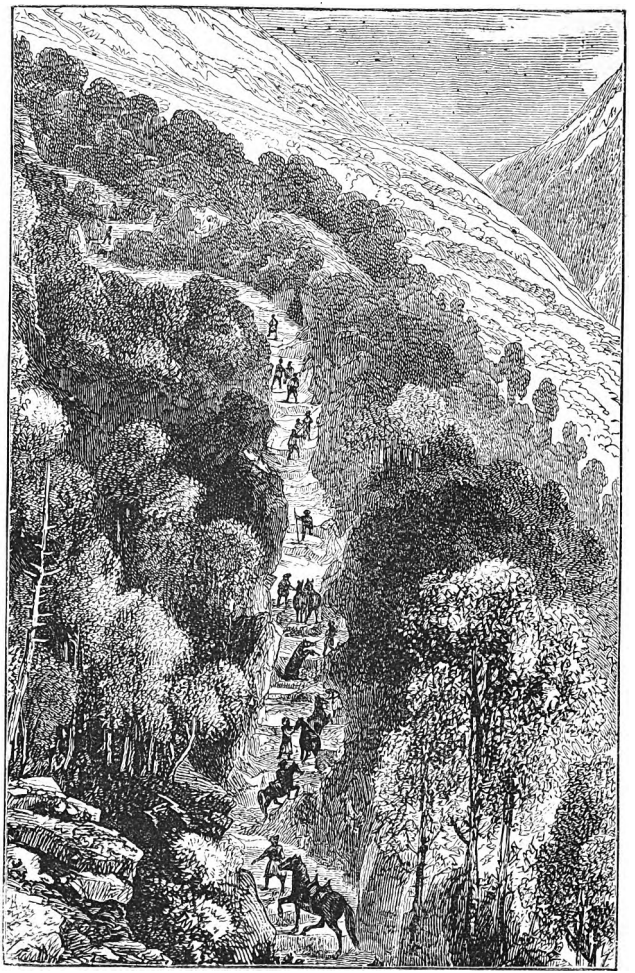

IN THE HIMALAYAS.

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CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED GUEST.

IN the deep, dim verandah of an Indian bungalow, perched among the rhododendron-clad precipices of the Himalayas, two small children were playing. Queenie had come to spend the day with Hugh, because his parents had gone out on a long expedition, from which they would not return till after his bedtime. They had had a pleasant morning, for Queenie had brought with her one or two new toys which her grandmother had sent her from England. Children in India have so few toys, and Hugh had got quite tired of the coloured bricks, and the models of native carts and sedan-chairs, which were the best the box of the travelling pedlar could produce. Then they had had dinner together, still in a corner of the verandah, and on the floor, in a picnic fashion not unusual to them, and the ayah and the bearer had squatted by their side and crooned stories to them while they ate. The ayah and the bearer had gone away to dinner now, and left them to play in the verandah alone.

'I wish the sun would get low, behind Yakko,' began Hugh, looking out down the hill to a tall

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peak which barred the west. 'The band never begins till the Mall is all shady, and ayah said if we were good she'd take us to hear the soldiers play.'

'The sun's not hot now, let's go outside, it's dull here,' responded Queenie, snatching up a pith hat like a great mushroom, and planting it on her fair curls.

Hugh followed her example, and two minutes later they were out on the narrow terrace scraped out of the hill-side in front of the house, where a few flowers struggled for existence on the rocky soil. They paid a visit to Bunnoo, the monkey, who was chained to a tree-trunk, and lay curled up fast asleep in the little box at the foot that was his home. But they did not venture near, for Bunnoo's temper was not so good as it might have been. They wandered round to the kitchen door, where Nip, the terrier, lay asleep in the sun. They asked him to come and play, but Nip only opened one eye, as much as to say it was too hot for that, and declined to stir. They looked from a safe distance at the cook's great grey goat, which gave them milk for breakfast. But Nanny's long horns made her anything but a desirable playfellow.

Suddenly Hugh gave a suppressed cry, and nudged Queenie.

'Look there! among the red dahlias. Such a beauty! Yes, I declare it is a swallow-tail!' and off he dashed after a magnificent dark butterfly almost as large as a small bird.

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Queenie hesitated a moment.

'The ayah said we were not to go out of the verandah,' she began.

'Nonsense. She's gone to her dinner, and the other ayah is busy with baby, and I haven't got a swallow-tail in my box at all. I'm going!'

Off he set, Queenie following, and the chase began. It was a long chase and a stern one. The butterfly had the advantage, for he could fly anywhere and everywhere; high up among the branches of the pine trees, while his little pursuers toiled and stumbled over rocks and up and down hill, heedless of whither he led them.

They came to a standstill at last through very want of breath, and stood, both of them crimson in the face, glaring up to the deep blue sky between the branches. But the butterfly was nowhere to be seen.

'I'm sure he went up *there*,' said Hugh.

'And I'm sure he went *that* way,' said Queenie.

'But I'm so hot——'

'And my legs *is* so tired——'

'And I've hurt my shin when I tumbled——'

'And I'm so firsty——'

'Hark! I hear a little stream. Let's go and get a drink.'

Tinkle, tinkle! through the forest came the sound of a little mountain torrent dropping over the rocks. Hugh's home was one of the very last houses in the European settlement of Mussoorie, and the mountain side beyond it was wild and

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lonely. The stream was farther off than the children thought for. They wandered down, down, down, under the desdars, guided by its voice.

Then, quite suddenly, they came upon it, in a tiny rocky glen. They stood on an overhanging rock and looked down on the little waterfall and the pool below it.

'However is we to get down there?' cried Queenie.

'Oh, you can get along all right!' responded Hugh. He liked to show off his superior valour as a boy; and, though he scratched his hands and tore his clothes, he managed to scramble down the rocks. Queenie, above, hesitated.

'I don't think I'm firsty now. I don't want to get down there. I'd rather go home and get some milk.'

'Oh, you *must* come down now I'm here!' returned Hugh. 'I can't get back that way. It's quite easy, and the water's so beautifully cold,' he added, dipping face and hands into the pool and bathing his wounded bare shin. 'I *do* wish I'd got that butterfly, though,' he went on, half to himself. 'It was more beautifuller ——'

A shrill shriek from Queenie startled him. He looked up, saw her stagger and stumble, and roll down head foremost, followed by loose stones and shingle. Hugh rushed to catch her, but too late. She came bounding against him, and knocked him down too. He picked himself up, but Queenie lay quite still. Hugh was horribly frightened.

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He tried to drag her up, but she opened her eyes and screamed.

'Oh, don't, don't! My foot! my foot!'

Her poor little foot was doubled underneath her, and hurt her fearfully if she moved. However, Hugh managed—for Queenie was nearly as big as himself—with a mighty effort to sit her up against the rock.

'It hurts me here dreadful,' she sobbed, as Hugh unbuttoned her boot as carefully as he could and drew off her stocking. 'Oh, it's all gone black!'

'And it's grown *so* fat," he added, in a horrified whisper.

'Can't you walk—not a step?' he asked, looking up at the trees, which already seemed to be shutting out the daylight. 'I feel inside very much as if it was tea-time.'

Queenie tried to wink back the tears which would come, and to be brave.

'I *can't* walk; can't you carry me?'

'Oh, Queenie! If you were only littler. You are only six months younger than me, and you're so tall for your age,' demurred Hugh, despondingly.

'What must we do?' sobbed Queenie. 'We must get home. I know it's late, and the band began playing ever so long ago. Ayah will be wondering where we are.'

'I wonder where we are,' Hugh repeated. 'I don't know which way we came; it's getting so dark under the trees.'

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'Call, Hugh. Perhaps some one will hear us and come.'

'*Qui hai! qui hai!*' he shouted, as if calling for a servant in the house, and Queenie's voice, rather husky, echoed him; but no answer came, only a soughing of the evening breeze through the pine trees, like the distant murmur of the sea.

'I'll go down the stream a little and see if we can find a path. Perhaps there may be a *jampanni* gathering wood about here.'

'And I'll put my poor foot in the water. It is *so* hot, and perhaps it will wash the black off.'

Hugh started off, feeling rather like an adventurous knight of old bent on a voyage of discovery He pushed his way along near the stream, over the rocks, and went on down, down, down. The Himalayas are very high mountains, and very steep. He saw no opening in the forest, no sign of any place he knew. As it happened, only he did not know it, every step he took was leading him farther from home. The sun had sunk behind Yakko long ago, and the band had begun playing on the Mall.

Suddenly he heard a shriek, and then his name called many times. With some difficulty he made his way back to Queenie.

'Oh, Hugh!' she screamed, 'you mustn't go away; you mustn't leave me. I'm frightened. I heard a noise. I'm sure it was a leopard; it will carry me off as it did dear Chip!'

Chip was the other white terrier (Nip's brother),

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and he had been carried off as he lay asleep in the verandah one twilight not long ago by a prowling leopard; not at all an uncommon occurrence.

Hugh looked round anxiously. It certainly had grown very dark in the wood. The Indian twilight is very short, and night soon falls in the deep valleys, shut off so early from the sun.

Queenie was white with terror and with pain.

'Sit down quite close, Hughie darling. I feel safer.'

The waterfall sang on, but as darkness fell other sounds of night mingled with its tune. A belated crow cawed in the branches, or an owl flapped heavily past with weird hootings. Then came a sound which filled Queenie with terror, and made her cling frantically to Hugh. It was a kind of frightful laugh, ringing louder and louder up from the valley.

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'It's only a jackal, you know. It's only a jackal shrieking, Queenie.' He tried to comfort her.

'But perhaps a leopard's near. Oh dear! oh dear! I want to get home, and my foot's so bad!'

'I wish we never had gone after that butterfly,' moaned Hugh. 'I'd give all the butterflies in my box, and my best marbles, all, if we were but safe home.'

'I want to get back to mother,' sobbed Queenie. 'I shall never see mother, never no more!'

Hugh, in despair, began to call again. He shouted himself hoarse, and it grew so dark that they could no longer see, but only heard the waterfall.

'I'll make another try to find the way,' he suggested at last. 'I'll go up, not down; and, Queenie, you shout or sing or make a noise, to keep the leopard away. I'll come back soon.'

Anything was better than doing nothing and imagining all sorts of dreadful things. Also the having to sing kept Queenie from crying, and as Hugh tried to pick his way up the mountain side, knocking and stumbling against the stems of the deodars, he was cheered by Queenie's sweet little voice echoing from below through the still night air.

She sang 'God save the Queen' twice through; it was the only song she knew. Then she tried a hymn, for she knew more hymns; and, as it was

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quite dark, she tried an evening hymn—the one she said every night with her prayers.

Hugh heard her get as far as, 'Keep me, O keep me, King of kings!' when a noise close at hand made him tremble with fear.

He felt sure it must be the leopard lurking among the trees, and gave himself up for lost. Then, just as he was thinking to himself that it was better the leopard should take him, as there might then be a chance for Queenie, and that a shout might warn her, he heard the noise again much louder.

'Shou-ou-ou-ou!' he shouted, at the top of his voice.

'Be the powers now! and how many may there be of ye so musical at this toime o' night?'

And a tall, dark figure, that he had taken for one of the pine trees, strode forward and caught him by the shoulder.

For one moment Hugh remembered fairy stories of gnomes and bad fairies and such-like dwellers in the forests. The next he forgot all his fear, and burst into a wild laugh of relief as he saw the red coat.

'Are you one of the soldiers? Oh! I'm so glad. Will you come and help Queenie home?'

Patrick Mulvany, private in the 110th regiment, and quartered for the summer near Mussoorie, was, though he would not have confessed it, quite as relieved as Hugh was when he saw the latter's little English face looking up to him through the

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gloom. Like all Irishmen, he was not devoid of superstition, and as he wended his solitary way back to barracks after a shooting expedition, and heard such unexpected music, his mind ran on the fairies of his native land.

'Shure now,' he exclaimed, as he tenderly lifted Queenie in his arms, 'when I heard yer little angel voice, I made sure it was the "good people" of the ould counthry come over here. And perhaps I'm not far from wrong, with these lovely goolden curls and all.'

Queenie was too tired with anxiety to enter into the joke. She let her head fall gently on Mulvany's red tunic as he climbed with her up the hill and on to the path, murmuring sleepily,—

'I'm not a fairy; I'm Captain Bridges' little girl, Queenie; and I'm so glad you've come!'

'Shure, miss, and I wouldn't have found ye at all but for the singing to guide me!'

Queenie did not forget that, and, ere she went to bed that night, as she knelt at her mother's knee saying her prayers, she looked up in her mother's face and asked: 'Do you think, mother, perhaps God heard the hymn, and did "keep us under His wings," and send the soldier?'

But it was some little time before either child got to bed that night. They had wandered farther from home than they had imagined, and were some time getting home. Both households were in terrible distress when they arrived. Servants had been seeking them in all directions, their mothers

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were in tears, and both Major Lawson and Captain Bridges were just about to mount their ponies and scour the neighbourhood.

At that moment Mulvany entered the verandah carrying Queenie, and with Hugh wandering wearily behind him.

When the doctor had been sent for and had bandaged Queenie's poor ankle, and both children had told their story with many tears, and had had some supper and been sent to bed, Major Lawson and Captain Bridges went to Mulvany, who had also been given some supper. They heard from him once more how, by the merest accident, he had come across the children, and then they offered him a present of money. But Mulvany pushed it from him.

'I don't want to be paid for it, begging your pardin, Major; I'm only too thankful meself to have found them. I married without leave when we was lying at Cork, and there's a little gossoon no bigger than your little lad as hasn't quite forgotten me, I make sure; and your little lad puts me in mind of him, begging your pardin, sorr.'

'Very well, Mulvany,' said Captain Bridges; 'we will send the present to the "little gossoon" instead.'

Christmas time in England two years later, and both Hugh and Queenie two years older, and still together. They are living in the same street in the country town where the 110th foot are quar

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tered, and many times a day Queenie runs across the road to see Hugh, or Hugh comes over to see her.

It is Christmas Eve, and in Queenie's home all is pleasure and preparation. Queenie, being an only child, is somewhat indulged, and this Christmas her parents have given her the great treat of a beautiful Christmas tree, covered with presents for herself and her little friends.

One great cloud, however, mars Queenie's pleasure. Over the way, across the street, poor Hugh sits in the nursery with a bad cold, a cold so bad that the doctor says that upon no consideration whatever is he to go out. And it is Christmas Eve, and Queenie's Christmas tree!

The two little friends shed many tears together over this melancholy occurrence. Queenie declares she does not want the tree at all now, if Hugh cannot be there. But when she sees how disappointed Hugh's little sister (the baby at Mussoorie) seems, she thinks to herself that that is rather a selfish way of looking at the matter. So she goes about her preparations again, tying on the candles and labelling the gifts, though with a heavy heart.

But Major Lawson, sorry for his little son's disappointment, has cleverly devised a plan by which he shall see something of the fun. Queenie is to leave the blinds up in the dining-room, and to place her tree close to the window. Hugh is to be well wrapped up and to sit in a chair near to

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the nursery window across the road, from whence he will be able to look down at Queenie's tree.

That same evening, when these happy children were making such pleasant plans, there was another little boy, no bigger, no older, and just as good, who was having no pleasure, but rather was very unhappy.

Yet Mickey Mulvany had been looking forward to Christmas too. It was the first Christmas his father had been with him for years. He had been soldiering in India, and Mickey and his mother had lived alone together. Then Mulvany had returned, his time in the army finished,—returned to be separated from his wife and little boy no more. Mickey had been very pleased.

But trouble had come. Mulvany got employment in a timber-cutting yard, and, while engaged in his work there, he had met with a bad accident, which had hurt his back. Mulvany would never be able to work any more. His wife did her best while he was in hospital, but it was hard work, and when the poor fellow came home again, a helpless cripple, it was to a home denuded of almost all its furniture, and where food and clothes were sorely lacking.

That Christmas time, which was to have been such a happy one, little Mickey felt both cold and hunger; he went about in boots full of holes, and the wind blew through his old clothes. Often he went to bed hungry.

Mickey did not complain much, because he saw

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it grieved his parents. But his poor little face complained for him, and grew daily more pinched and pale.

'An' to-morrer Christmas Day an' all!' sighed Mrs. Mulvany. 'An' it's sorra a bit o' Christmas dinner ye'll be gettin'! So come along wid me, and let's have a look at the shops. It'll be warming like!'

Mickey set forth with his mother, who spent almost her last money on some potatoes and bread for the morrow, and then the two walked about the well-lighted streets and looked into the gay, glittering shops.

'It makes me feel hungrier nor ever, mother,' whimpered Mickey, as the cold wet snow chilled his little feet through his bad shoes, and the flakes, beginning to fall again gently, wetted his face and hair.

Queenie had clapped her hands when she had awoke that morning and found a white world, and even Hugh, sitting cosily over the fire, had grumbled because he could not go out snowballing. But for poor Mickey the snow had no delights.

'An' we'd best be afther gettin' home agin,' said Mrs. Mulvany, as it began to snow again. They left the streets of shops, and trudged wearily through lines of comfortable-looking houses, all well shut up with thick doors and warm curtains, through which one caught a glimpse of pleasant lights. But Mickey missed the amusement of the

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shop windows, and felt colder and hungrier than ever.

Suddenly, on ahead, across the white pavement, fell a gleam of bright light, a brilliant speck of dazzle in the dim street. When they came to the window whence it issued, Mickey uttered a low cry of delight, and stood transfixed with surprise.

For, through the window, he saw a brilliant Christmas tree, hung with more beautiful toys than he had ever dreamt of. Round the tree, a merry group, danced prettily dressed children, and one, taller than the rest, and with golden curls, was cutting down presents from the tree and distributing them.

'Shure now, Mickey, it's frozen to death ye'll be standin' and watchin' there,' said Mrs. Mulvany.

'Oh! mother, but I must look; it's too beautiful. Heaven must be like that!'

'An' there's no cold and hunger there,' murmured Mrs. Mulvany. 'Shure, an' sometimes it's hard to believe as how God cares for us down here!'

'Ah! mother, but He does now! Why, only last Sunday teacher taught me a new text at school about the sparrers, "not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God. Fear not; ye are of more value than many sparrows," murmured Mickey, staring in at the window with all his might.

Some one else was staring with all *his* might. And he was no other than the poor little prisoner Hugh, at the second-floor window across the way.

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He watched Mickey quite as intently as Mickey watched Queenie. He saw him stamp his poor numb feet and blow his blue fingers, but yet remain rooted to the spot, while his mother walked patiently up and down a little farther off, unwilling to deny him such a pleasure.

Then Hugh turned to *his* mother, sitting working by the nursery fire, to bear her little invalid son company.

'Mother,' he said, 'I'm sorry I was so very cross and grumbling about not going to the tree this afternoon. See, there's a poor little boy much worse off than I am!'

Then he added, 'I'd like to give him something off the tree. May I send a letter to Queenie?'

A few minutes later the latter was surprised at a note from Hugh :—

'DEAR QUEENIE,—There is a poor cold little ragged boy outside, so pleased with the tree. Will you please give him the presents you meant for me, because I don't deserve any? I was so cross about my cold. And please give him my share of cake.

'Your loving HUGH.'

'Well, I suppose this indulged little invalid must have his way,' said Captain Bridges, when Queenie explained Hugh's request. 'Bring one or two toys into the hall, and a slice of cake, and I'll send downstairs for a piece of bread and meat for him. I think that will be the present he'll most enjoy, poor little chap.'

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Words fail to describe Mickey's astonishment when the front door opened and the servant invited him in. His mother had literally to push him on to the door-mat, and then the servant asked her in too. Through the open door he caught a glimpse of the wonderful tree and the sounds of the children's laughter, while a delicious feeling of warmth glowed through his poor little shivering body.

Captain Bridges was right; the nice slice of bread and meat appealed to him more than the toys. But he broke it in half.

'You must have some, mother. She's colder nor me, sir, 'cos she can't run about as I do.'

Then he plunged into the food and ate with avidity. Suddenly he had stopped short. His eyes, wandering over the brightly lit hall, had noticed Captain Bridges' regimental helmet hanging on the hat-stand. He nudged his mother.

'See, mother, that's got the badge and the number on like the one feyther had, what he wore on his. "One hundred and ten, Chalkshire Regiment."'

'And what do you know about the regiment, my man?' asked Captain Bridges.

'It was feyther's regiment, shure,' cried Mickey, 'out in Indy!'

'And who is feyther,' asked the captain again.

'Why just feyther, *my* feyther, in course!' explained Mickey.

The captain smiled.

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'And who are you?'

'I'm just Mickey Mulvany,' answered the lad, his mouth full of cake.

Captain Bridges turned to Mrs. Mulvany, and soon drew from her the story of her husband's misfortunes. He took her address, and giving Mickey a shilling, told him he would come and see his 'feyther' the next day.

And sure enough on Christmas Day morning both Major Lawson and Captain Bridges appeared in Mulvany's poor lodging.

The sick man was overjoyed to see his former officers again, and they were very distressed at the sad condition in which they found him. But they cheered him much by promising to find some easy employment for him, and some work as charwoman for his wife.

'We mustn't forget what you did for our children, Mulvany, up at Mussoorie, when they were lost. We must send the little lad to school, and enlist him in the regiment when he is old enough. And now,' added Major Lawson, opening the door, and calling on to the landing outside, 'you can come in, Hugh and Queenie, and wish a merry Christmas to your old friend Mulvany and the "little gossoon."'

Mrs. Mulvany, as she showed them out, wiped her eyes with her apron, and said to Mickey,—

'Mickey, I was wrong to speak as I did about God not caring for us, and you were right about the sparrows. I feel I can't be too thankful to

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Him for the wonderful help He has sent us. I'll never grumble again!'

'I am glad about my cold,' Hugh said to Queenie on their way home; 'if it had not been for that we should never have found out poor Mulvany!'

Queenie is going to have a Christmas tree again this year, and you may be sure she and Hugh will not forget to put some presents for Mickey on it.

'For, father,' she said to him as they walked back from Mulvany's, 'I don't think I ever quite understood before what St. Paul says about it being "more blessed to give than to receive." But I do now. I never had such a nice Christmas before!'

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CHAPTER V.

CHING THE CHINAMAN.

ALL my life I've so often been told I'm very pretty, that I hope you won't mind my beginning by saying that I am. I have a beautiful long silky black coat, tan-coloured leggings on each of my short-fringed legs, a tan waistcoat under my black ruff, and tan linings to my drooping silky ears. When I'm in good spirits, my tail curls nobly, three times round ; my eyes goggle (they are very protruding), and my little flat nose wrinkles archly.

Yes, I'm a pug! But no relation to the fat, short-haired, tan-coloured dogs you call by that name in England. Oh no! I'm Ching the Chinese pug, of a very old family in the celestial empire.

Long, long ago, when I was a mere fat little ball of black wool, my memory carries me back to a pleasant time in that far-off land. I lived in a house in a beautiful garden, with pagodas and bridges and pigtailed men in flat hats. My mistress wore long flowing sleeves to her dress, and when she toddled out to take the air, mincing along on her funny little feet (she'd hardly any

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toes at all, I verily believe), she'd pop me in her sleeve to keep her hands warm. I was her sleeve-dog. That was what I was kept for. We were not big enough nor fat enough to make pies of, like our friends, the short, red-haired, long-nosed dogs; we were only good as hand-warmers. And lest we should grow too big to get into the sleeves, they kept us in cages, like squirrels, and fed us on rice. I, however, had a happier lot, for my mistress Ta Lin was very fond of me, and made a pet of me, and let me run about the house near her.

It was a pleasant life, but it came to a sudden and sad end. One day, amid a fearful banging and whizzing and popping and shouting, a number of fierce and angry men burst into our beautiful garden. They wore red coats without flowing sleeves, and no pigtails. And when Ta Lin saw them, she snatched me up in her arms with a shriek, and rushed off as fast as her poor little feet would carry her.

But the red-coated men with their big feet were more than a match for her, and as they came close up, she dropped me on the path, and one of them stooped and picked me up. Then Ta Lin ran away, and that was the last I ever saw of my first mistress.

'Bless me! and if 'ere ain't a funny little dawg, and no mistake!'—that was what the sergeant, as I afterwards found out the others called him, exclaimed; and with that he popped me inside the

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knapsack he carried on his back. It was rather stuffy quarters, but it was safe, which was something, for the awful din began again, only nearer and louder than ever. Shouting, banging, booming, running, rushing,—and then suddenly thud! and the sergeant fell heavily to the ground. It was a mercy he did not crush me.

When I saw the light of day again everything was very quiet. Some one opened the knapsack and gave an exclamation of surprise at seeing me. And I gave a yap of delight and jumped out. I'd had quite enough of being shut up there. Then the sergeant's voice sounded again, but so weak and low: "It's a little bit of a dawg as I picked up in the loot of the summer palace, doctor. He can just keep with me and trouble no one.'

And I crept in underneath the wounded sergeant's cloak on the straw bed, and nestling close to him, sucked my forepaws contentedly, as I used to do in Ta Lin's lap when at my ease.

It was during the many quiet days that followed, when the sergeant lay so still, that he and the other quiet men lying around christened me Ching, and Ching I have been ever since. Ta Lin used to call me something else—a string of ever so many short names; but you would not understand them, even if I could remember them to tell you.

But a day came when we moved, the sergeant and I,—he on a sort of bed, and I lying by his side. And they carried us to some water,—a larger pond than ever I saw in the garden, where

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Ta Lin used to feed the ducks—and thence to a ship, and here they separated us.

I now realized how unlucky my relations had been whose lives had been spent in cages, for they shut me up in one. But I was not alone in my misfortune. There were several of my species on board in cages, and one or two large eating-dogs tied up by collars, and a crowd of birds of all sorts, such a chirping as there was. Then there were sheep and poultry, but every day some of them disappeared. Some of the birds and dogs died too from the drenching we used to get when the waves broke over us; and I got so miserable and pined so in captivity, to which I had never been accustomed, that I verily believe I should have died too, but for the sergeant. Every day he came limping along, nearly as hobbly now as Ta Lin used to be, with some tit-bit saved from his dinner for Ching.

How I used to watch for the sergeant's coming; and when he came near my cage, I would croak and snuffle and purr in my own little funny way down in my throat. It sounded as if I were doing my very best to growl, but the sergeant knew it meant—Thank you.

Never shall I forget how delighted I was to see land again, and green trees, and to have a run and stretch my short little legs, which had grown quite stiff,—so stiff, delighted as I was, I couldn't run far. So the sergeant caught me up in his arms and carried me. There was a pleasant sound of

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drums and music in the air, and the red-coated men looked as pleased as I was to be on land again. Presently there was a pitter-patter of little feet running towards us. A pair of arms were thrown round the sergeant's neck, and a somebody climbed up into his arms and tried to turn me out.

'Oh, father, father, I'm so pleased you've come home again!'

'Whist, Tim, take care, or you'll hurt the little dawg. This is Ching, the little Chinaman, as bore me company all the time I lay in hospital.'

And a pair of little hands seized me and hugged me tightly: a pair of blue eyes under sunny curls gazed at me with delight.

'Father, what a little love of a dog! I'm just going to have it for my very own.'

The sergeant smiled.

'Shure, and you're welcome, Tim. I can spare him, now I've got ye back again!'

And he took Tim up on his shoulder proudly, and the boy held me so that I could not feel jealous. But one of the redcoats, who had lain in the next bed to the sergeant in hospital, laughed and said, 'Ah, Master Ching, your nose will be out of joint now!'

But I can't think what he meant, for I rubbed my nose against the sergeant's brass buttons, and it felt just the same as ever, what there was of it.

Little Tim and I grew to be great friends, for

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the sergeant seemed always busy now, and had no time to play. But Tim and I romped in the verandah all the hot hours, sometimes falling asleep rolled up together. Then, when the sun got low, Tim and I and the ayah would wander down the dusty road to hear the band play. The ayah would squat and talk with the other ayahs about pice and rice, and Tim would play with the other children from the barracks; not noisy, scampering games, but a languid wandering, with queer native toys; and all the while the band rang out in the hot dusk, and I lay still with my eye on Tim. In the early mornings we went out again, sometimes before the sun was up. Sometimes we got as far as the parade ground, all dust and noise and shouting and tramping, and, in the midst of the crowd, I occasionally caught a glimpse of the sergeant's white helmet. Then back to breakfast, as the sun grew hot, and then long hours indoors under the punkah's swing.

I really don't know what Tim would have done without me. He had no toys such as I now know English children have. There are no toy shops in India. Sometimes a *box-wallah* would come round —a sort of pedlar and out of his trunks produce some lacquer workboxes, or models of a native cart or palanquin, which Tim would coax the sergeant to buy for him.

No; Tim and I had to find our own amusements in the little brick oven of a couple of rooms with a verandah, which Tim called home. One of these

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was chasing the little striped grey squirrels which lived in the thatch. Tim and I would sit very still, pretending to be asleep; the squirrel would creep nearer and nearer, ears pointed, tail erect, intent on some crumbs we'd dropped from a piece of bread. When he got quite close, we'd make a movement, and whisk!—away went the squirrel like a streak of grey lightning, and was sitting up there on the top of the pillar, on his hind legs, combing his whiskers, with his bushy black tail spread out behind him like a fan.

Then the crows. Ah! those Indian crows, how different they are to the rooks cawing in the avenue as I write. They were so artful, they nearly got the better of us sometimes. They would watch the cookboy bringing Tim's dinner across from the kitchen to the verandah, where he generally preferred to eat it; and if the boy was not very sharp, they would pounce down upon the dish and carry off a piece of meat before his very eyes. Many a good bone have they robbed me of. If I ventured to carry it down the steps to eat outside, two or three of them would hover round, hopping nearer and nearer, with their sly black heads perked on one side. To hear the growling I had to keep up to ward them off, you would have thought me the most ill-tempered dog that ever worried a bone.

But one day there nearly came an end to me altogether, and through a much more alarming foe than a crow. Tim was asleep in his bed under the

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punkah. All was still except an occasional howl of a wild dog, or the weird bay of a jackal or two wandering round the barracks. I shudder even now, if I recall the sound. But the night was hot, and as I could not take off my thick coat as Tim did his, I felt the heat extremely. I wandered out to the foot of the verandah steps and lay stretched there at full length, panting—my tongue as far out as it could go. Suddenly through the darkness a huge dark four-footed mass approached me. It looked like a dog; but, hungry and wild as a poor wretch of a homeless, masterless pariah dog may may be, I knew it would never attack one of its kind. What could it be? I felt too frightened to move. A great pair of fierce eyes glared at me. A huge jaw full of teeth opened upon me, and snap!—I found myself seized by the nape of the neck and carried off. Ah! that pretty thick ruff of mine, it is useful as well as ornamental. It probably saved my life.

I uttered one yowl of terror, and then gave myself up for lost. No, not quite! a stone whizzed by me and struck the jackal, and I was dropped thud! on the hard ground. When I came to myself I was lying on little Tim's bed. His blue eyes were staring with sleepy surprise and fright, and he hugged me convulsively. After that I always slept safe on little Tim's bed, till—ah! it makes me sad to write about it even now, and the tears come into my eyes, and Reggy wipes them from me with the tips of my silky ears, and says, 'Ah,

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Chingy, darling, you've got a cold again ; you don't like this English climate of ours!'

It grew hotter and hotter. There was less going out then ever. They blocked up the doors with grass mats, which they kept drenched with water, and there I lay all day in the cool draught.

Tim seemed too tired to play now. Even the bandstand was too far for his weary little legs, and he did not care to romp with me. We lay about quite still all day, with our tongues out—that is to say, I did. Poor Tim's was not long enough to hang out, or perhaps it might have cooled him to do so.

But there came one sad day when little Tim did not leave his bed at all, and the sergeant stopped at home all day and sat by the boy. Tim lay very still, holding the sergeant's hand in one hand, while the other rested on my head. It was so light and weak, I hardly felt it.

Then I must have gone to sleep, for I woke with a start to find the grey dawn creeping in through the window screens. Little Tim's hand on my head felt still and cold, and the sergeant gently lifted me down from under it. He carried me out in the verandah, and as he did so, some hot drops fell on my nose.

Later on I tried to get back to Tim. I scratched and whined at the door, but I am sure he did not hear me, for he always came and opened to me directly. The sergeant came out of another room and took me up on his knee, and there I sat quiet all through the long hot hours.

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When the sun grew low, several soldiers came, and women, and some of Tim's little playfellows; and they brought a hospital litter, like that on which the sergeant and I made our first journey from the hospital to the ship. And in that they put a white box, covered with flowers, and carried it away. And the sergeant followed it, dressed, as if for parade, in his helmet and his sword, and the ayah hovered in the rear, crying. When they were gone, I had a good hunt through the house for Tim; but I could not find him anywhere, so I curled up on his little bed and went to sleep.

It was *so* dull after I lost Tim, though the sergeant took more notice of me, and we were as much together as in the old hospital days. But the house seemed so dreary, I was quite glad when we went away.

Another voyage and a longer one! And oh, the cold towards the end of it!

When we reached England, a change came over the sergeant. He left off his red coat and his helmet and his belt, and at first I hardly knew him. What a change dress does make in you human beings! How odd I should look with my hair off, going about in my skin and bones, though! The sergeant did not seem to have so much to do, and we moved about a good deal; but we saw no more soldiers and heard no more bands. But instead we saw gardens, and such gardens! They reminded me of my puppy days in China, and I longed to run about in them. One day my wish was grati-

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fied, and this was how it came about. The sergeant and I stood idly looking over a gate at a smooth-shaven lawn and blazing flower-beds, when down the drive, on a smart little pony, came a small boy. There was a something—the colour of the eyes, the curl of the sunny hair, that struck us both. Could it be—— I gave a little prance of joy forward. The boy looked down kindly from his pony and spoke: 'Oh, you dear little dog!'

It was a mistake. That was not Tim's voice, and I returned crestfallen to the sergeant, my tail uncurled and trailing disconsolately on the ground. My master took me up in his arms.

'Ah, Chingy, man, I do believe you saw the likeness too!'

I nestled my head under his chin for all answer. I would have given anything to be able to tell him how I missed Tim.

We went sadly on our way along the road. We had gone some distance when we heard the sudden rush and shriek of a train. This was followed by a hurrying noise of horses' feet coming nearer and nearer. Then, to our horror, round the corner of the road dashed the pony as hard as he could gallop. His little rider sat him pluckily, but had evidently lost all control over him. His blue eyes were starting with terror, his hat had fallen off, and his fair hair streamed behind him. In an instant the sergeant had put me,—nay, almost thrown me down (he had never been so rough to me in his life before, but I did not mind), and rushed alongside

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the pony. He caught the bridle, and in a few strides pulled him up. The little rider's hold relaxed, and he fell off and lay a crumpled heap on the road. A frightened nurse and groom now appeared round the corner, but the sergeant picked up the little boy, and carried him in through the gate, whence we had watched him emerge, and up to a big house, where he took him in. I followed, and that is how I got into the garden. I waited on the steps when the sergeant went in and looked around. How little Tim would have enjoyed playing in that garden! But his only play-place was the dusty hot barrack-square.

This garden is my home now. The sergeant lives at the lodge by the gate we looked over. But I'm nearly as much at the big house with Reggy as I am with him. And we both prefer playing in the garden to being indoors anywhere. I hear Reggy calling now: 'Ching! Ching!' I must go to him.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAYFELLOWS THAT WERE LOST AND FOUND.

THE whistle rang through the railway station. For the last time the blue-bloused coolie had banged upon the bar of iron that served for a bell; the porters, with a supreme effort, had succeeded in finally packing into the open cattle-truck-like carriage the last of the frantic peasants, laden with innumerable parcels, and with bangles jingling on arms and ankles. The train was off.

Mabel stood upon the platform, holding tightly her mother's hand. Her eyes were so full of tears that she could hardly see anything. The moving train had become a blurr. But above the increasing rumble and the cries and the jabber of the natives she could hear a merry boyish voice, shouting in English, 'Good-bye, Mab! good-bye, mother!' and distinguish a white sun-hat being waved frantically from a carriage window.

Mabel sobbed aloud as she followed her parents back to their carriage. Mingled with her weeping came the lamentations of the old bearer and ayah, who had been with the children ever since they were born.

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'Ay! ay! my Franky *baba*. I shall never see him again!' wailed the ayah.

'May the little sahib's shadow never grow less, and may his highness grow up to resemble his father!' ejaculated the bearer, wiping his eyes with the back of his horny hand.

They got into the carriage and drove down the Mall. It was growing dusk, and all the European residents of Punkahpore were taking their drive in the cool of the day. The sun had set beyond the bare, sun-baked plain to the west, leaving behind a perfectly clear sky, though it was nearly dark under the row of trees which shaded the Mall. At the bandstand the band was playing merry music, but Mabel turned away her head, and would not listen, she was so miserable. Carriage after carriage, and now and then a gentleman on horseback, passed by and bowed to mother, but Mabel took no interest in anything. Frank was gone, and every minute was taking him farther away from her.

Suddenly she asked, 'Will Franky have a pony when he gets to England?'

'Not at school,' replied father. 'In England schoolboys play cricket and football and do lessons, and have no time for anything else much. But perhaps uncle will give him a pony to ride when he goes there for the holidays.'

'And won't he have a bearer?'

'Oh dear, no!' And mother, sad though she was, smiled. 'In England it is always nice and

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cool, and people can do everything for themselves. Frank won't be dressed and undressed like a baby, I hope.'

'And there are lots of boys at the school Frank's going to?'

'Twenty, I think.'

'Twenty boys to play with! And I've nobody now!' and Mabel began to cry again.

'We will go home,' said mother. 'You will be better in bed to-night. And, besides, there's somebody waiting for you at home.'

Mabel looked up quickly and brightened. Then her face fell again.

'Franky will never be waiting at home for me no more.'

'But some one else is.'

'Oh! his monkey, you mean,' sighed Mabel. 'I promised Frank I'd try and make up to Bunnoo for his going away, and pet him. But I don't like Bunnoo, and Bunnoo doesn't like me. He springs upon me and tears my frock, and frightens me. But I'll try to please Frank.'

It was quite dark when they returned to the large, lofty bungalow, with high-pitched roof and deep verandahs, and all the six rooms opening out of each other on one floor, that Mabel called home. How silent, how deserted it seemed!

Frank's bed stood empty in the deserted nursery. His books and toys were scattered in his corner, and an old discarded hat of his on a chair was more than Mabel could bear the sight of. She let

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the ayah undress her without a word, too miserable to say anything.

When she was ready for bed mother came in to hear her say her prayers; mother's eyes were red, too, as if she had been crying, and she gave Mabel such a long, long cuddle, and such a loving kiss.

When Mabel had said 'Our Father' and 'Pray, God, bless father and mother,' she stopped and looked up into mother's face. 'It *is* nice, mother, one Father, up there, to hear both Franky and me say our prayers to Him, I here at home, Franky away on the sea! And, mother, may I ask Him anything; you taught me once some words about asking Him.'

'Ask, and ye shall receive,' said mother. 'God's ear is ever open to our prayer, wherever we are, no matter where.'

'Well then, mother, 'ou said when I was as big as Frank is I'd have to be sent home to England, too, didn't 'ou, mother?'

Mother nodded sadly, and Mabel went on with her prayer.

'And, please God, let me get big and old very, very quick, so as to get over the sea to Frank, quick, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen. Perhaps I shall find I've grown bigger by the morning,' said she, with a brighter look, and prepared to get into bed.

There was a face on the pillow, encircled with a mass of fair hair, and two wide-open blue eyes were looking at her.

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Mabel paused in surprise.

'Who's got into my bed, mother?'

Mother smiled.

'Mother, is it a new baby we've got?'

But it lay so still that Mabel put out a hand and touched it gently. Then she gave a cry of delight and caught it up in her arms.

'Oh! mother! it's the beautifullest, the biggest doll I ever see'd. Look at its dear little wax hands and feet, too—and its hair! It's as big as a real baby, isn't it? And how it smiles and shows its little teeth! Is it for me?'

'For you, my darling, to be a little companion for you, now Frank is gone. I sent for it all the way from Calcutta. It is one of the largest and prettiest I could get.'

Mabel clasped the doll to her in an ecstasy.

'It *is* beautiful! If only Franky—but no, Frank never did care about dolls! And she's my very own? Oh! mother, how kind of you! *This* was who was waiting for me!'

And not many minutes later Mabel's eyes were closed in sleep, her tear-stained cheek pressed against the dolly's rosy wax one, and her arms clasped tightly round it.

That same evening that Mabel saw Frank off in the train to Bombay and England, some new arrivals stepped out off a train on to the platform of the Punkahpore station about half an hour later.

They were a tall, grave-looking gentleman, and a small, fair-haired boy, both dressed in deep

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mourning, and surrounded by the usual tribe of servants whom Europeans in India are obliged to have to wait upon them.

The great station looked strange and gloomy, with its dim oil-lamps, and crowd of brown, dusky faces, and babel of the Hindoostanee tongue. The boy shrank close to his father, and they got into a kind of wooden cab, with shutters instead of glass windows, and drove away into the darkness. Ronald saw on each side of the road a seemingly endless line of trees, with here and there a house through a gateway. At last they pulled up at a flight of steps leading into a verandah, beyond which Ronald saw a large lighted room.

White-robed servants flitted out to meet them and made obeisance, such as we read of in the Old Testament days.

'This is Mr. Smith's bungalow, my boy,' said Colonel Maclean. 'We are going to stop here till we can settle into a house of our own. And here is Mr. Smith himself.'

A tall figure came out to greet them.

'How d'ye do, Maclean? Very glad to see you!'

'Very good of you to take us in,' rejoined Colonel Maclean. 'This is my poor little boy. Shake hands, Ronald.'

Ronald was very tired with his long journey, and he felt strange and lonely in this new house. His father and Mr. Smith sat and talked and smoked till dinner was announced. They invited

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Ronald to come and have some with them, but the boy preferred bed.

The bearer came and undressed him, and then left him lying in the bed alone in the strange room. The moonlight came streaming into the verandah, and the French windows were wide open. Outside the night was very still, except for the distant howl of a jackal, and the clatter of plates from the dining-room.

Ronald had said his prayers—he never forgot to do that, for he had promised his mother he never would; but, tired as he was, he could not sleep. He could not get over the loss of his mother, who always used to come at this time and kiss him good-night. It was so dull, too, sleeping alone.

He missed Lily's bed close to his. He remembered the stories they used to tell, the songs they sang themselves to sleep with, and the laughs they had together after they were put to bed. How sad, how desolate it seemed without Lily!

Only six weeks ago and mother and Lily had both been there to kiss him, to play with him. And now they were both dead and gone, laid in the white walled cemetery of Bulamabad, the station Colonel Maclean had just left, and the world seemed very much altered to poor little Ronald. Father was so sad and grave, and hardly talked at all. No wonder the tears fell fast upon the little lad's pillow.

But there is One who 'sticketh closer than a brother,' Who knows every one's troubles even

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before we tell Him, and Who comforts those who mourn 'as his mother comforteth.' A loving Father in heaven looked down on the desolate little boy with His all-watchful eye of pity, with the love, closer, warmer, stronger than any earthly love of mother or little sister, the love that is so wonderful that St. Paul calls it 'the love that passeth all understanding.'

Suddenly Ronald felt something moist and warm on the hand which lay outside the bed. Ronald started up in terror, and was about to shriek for the bearer. Ideas of wolves, jackals, snakes came into his head.

Something was sitting by the bed.

Ronald put out his hand again. The something was hairy and moved. It licked his hand again quietly. Then Ronald saw that it was a large black poodle dog.

'Poor dog, poor old man,' said Ronald, patting the soft woolly head which was laid on the bed, and stroking his nose. There was something very comforting about the feel of that nice black head.

When Colonel Maclean came in that night to see his little boy before he went to bed himself, he found Ronald lying quite over the edge of the bed, with a hand and arm round Don's curly neck.

The next morning, very early, the bearer took Ronald out for a walk along the Mall. It was very dull; the bearer was not conversational, and stalked behind Ronald without speaking. It was already getting near the hot weather at Punkah-

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pore, but the early mornings were still crisp and cool. Ladies and children were taking their morning drives and rides, and a sound of a band came from the parade ground, where the troops were drilling. Don came out uninvited with Ronald.

'So you've made friends, you and Don, I perceive,' said Mr. Smith, when the little boy and the dog came in together to breakfast. 'Don was a great pet of my children's before their mother took them home to England a few months ago, and I daresay he is pleased to find a child about the house again. Have you seen him perform? Come here, Don.'

Don ran up to his master, who took a small stick off the table.

'Now, Don, stand to attention.'

Don stood up on his hind legs, his fore paws hanging. Mr. Smith placed the stick inside his right fore leg.

'Present arms, Don.'

Don stood as rigid as a sentry.

'Don, you're a deserter, and deserters are *shot!*'

Don dropped the stick, and lay down full length on the floor, motionless.

'The Queen has sent you a pardon!'

Don jumped up and whisked round the room delighted.

'Three cheers for the Queen!' cried Mr. Smith.

'Bow! wow! wow!' barked Don. And Ronald

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clapped his hands and shrieked with laughter as he had not done for many a day.

After this, he and Don became inseparable. But one morning, when he called for Don to come for a walk, he found him otherwise engaged in the verandah. The barber, who came every morning to shave Mr. Smith and Colonel Maclean, had Don in hand, and was performing the same office for him, carefully shaving his hind quarters, trimming the tufts on his back, his legs, his tail, and the tip of his nose, and making him look quite spruce, though Don hardly appeared to relish the attentions of the barber.

In the evenings, when Mr. Smith drove out in his dog-cart, he sometimes took Ronald with him. Don would follow, galloping and barking. It was sometimes quite dark before they returned, and when the carriage lamps were lighted Don would have great fun. He imagined that the reflection of the lights on the banks and on the roadside was a kind of will-o'-the-wisp, got up for his especial amusement and tantalization. He chased them, barking, ever in vain, and in his eager pursuit did not notice where he was going, and would roll head over heels into the ditch, making Ronald laugh.

In the meantime another little lonely heart in a bungalow not far off Mr. Smith's was also being cheered. It was Victoria who was cheering Mabel, for Victoria she had named the beautiful big doll—after the Queen. Mabel had been much

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impressed with the grand parade of all the troops held at Punkahpore, as at all other garrisons in India, on January 1st, to commemorate with cheers and firing of salutes the Queen's being proclaimed Empress of India.

Mother's tailor, who sat working cross-legged in the verandah all day, had fashioned some beautiful clothes for Victoria, and one day Mabel came running in to her mother. 'See, mother, Victoria's got a lovely coat and hat made; may I take her out for a drive this evening?'

Mother consented, and after a lengthy toilet Victoria was ready to accompany her little mistress.

Father drove, and mother sat by him in the front seat of the dog-cart, Mabel behind, with Victoria seated proudly, though somewhat stiffly, beside her.

The native groom was preparing to stand on the back step and cling on after the fashion of the country, when father dismissed him, telling him to run on to the reading-room, and await them there on their return. This was rather unfortunate, as will be seen. They set off down the Mall, and soon passed a little boy with a black poodle walking by his side, and a dignified bearer stalking behind.

'What a funny dog! All shaven, with little balls of hair on his tail and nose. Look, mother!'

Mabel turned round and climbed up on the seat to point out the dog to her mother.

'Mabel you *must* be still when you are sitting

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there alone. You will fall out, and Mohun is not there to catch you.'

Mabel turned back again. 'I'm so sorry, I'm always forgetting——' when suddenly she gave a great scream.

Mother and father looked round hastily, expecting to see her lying in the middle of the dusty road. The little girl's face was quite white with fright.

'Victoria!' she gasped—'Victoria's gone!'

They had already left the Mall and turned down two roads, passing several bullock-carts and carriages, besides natives walking.

Victoria's fate seemed doubtful. It was impossible to tell where she had fallen out, and besides, she might have been run over or picked up by a native and stolen.

Mabel's tears began to flow.

'It was all 'cos I was disobedient and didn't sit still, as I'm always told to,' she sobbed. 'Oh! Victoria! my beau'ful Victoria!'

Suddenly, racing down the middle of the road, as hard as he could tear, was seen a black object.

It came nearer, and Mabel recognised the funny black poodle.

It came nearer still, and she saw something white dangling out of its mouth.

It made straight for the carriage, and Mabel gave a scream of delight.

'Oh! Victoria, mother! The black dog's carrying Victoria!'

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Don stood quite still by the carriage, wagging his tufted tail. Father sprang out, and took Victoria's frock out of his mouth. Don let her go at once, and stood quietly, still wagging his tail.

Mabel received Victoria with a soft crow of joy. She was not much the worse—rather dusty, and her frock was wet where Don had held her. Her hat was gone, but what did that matter?

'Oh! the dear dog! She's not hurt at all, he was so very careful! Come here, dear dog, and let me pat you!'

'That dog deserves the Albert medal given for saving life,' laughed father. 'But the question is, What shall we do with him now? We can't leave him here, we are so near the native city; he might be stolen or lost, and he's a valuable dog. I do not see any one he belongs to about. I'll put him into the carriage by you, Mabel, and we'll drive home and make inquiries about him.'

So they went back again, a very happy trio on the back seat, Mabel, Victoria, and Don.

But poor Ronald on the Mall alone was anything but happy. When he saw Don tear off down the Mall and disappear round a corner, he felt very sad. He shouted, he whistled, but in vain; Don did not return; and poor Ronald continued his solitary walk.

Colonel Maclean and Mr. Smith were dining out, and the bungalow was silent and deserted when Ronald returned without Don. He had a

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faint hope Don might have run home, but none of the servants had seen him, and the lonely little boy went to bed in tears.

He was half asleep when he thought he had a dream. He heard English voices in the verandah, a little girl's voice, and, in a dreamy kind of way, he wondered if it was Lily come back to him.

The voices came nearer into the room, and at the same time a soft, hairy nose was rubbed over his face. Ronald started up.

'Don! you've come back. I'm so glad!'

He stopped short with surprise. A lady stood by his bed. Could it be mother? And with her was a little girl. Was it Lily?

His heart gave a great bound of joy, and then fell again. Lily had yellow hair, and by the lamplight he could see this little girl was dark.

She came up to him and looked at him a minute kindly.

'You nice little boy; you're like my Frank, only a size smaller, and you've got a nice dog. I like you: I like your dog. He saved my beau'ful doll. I'll give you a kiss, because I don't like kissing dogs. Why, 'ou've been kying! 'ou cheek all wet. See, mother.'

The lady bent down over him and gave him such a tender kiss.

'Who are you? Nobody's kissed me like that since mammy died,' murmured Ronald, sleepily. He was very tired, and still only half dreaming, as it were.

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The lady did not answer, but, tucking him up carefully, sat down on the bed with her arm thrown round him, and in a very few minutes Ronald was fast asleep, one hand on Don's head.

Don did not know all he was doing for Ronald that day he picked up Victoria. But for him and Victoria, Ronald and Mabel might never have met. But ever afterwards they were the best of friends and playfellows. They rode together, they walked together, and when the long days grew hot, Ronald spent more time in Mabel's bungalow, playing with her, than in his own home, and her mother was very kind to him. It was a most happy arrangement, and the only people who did not get the best of it were Don and Victoria. The latter was played with much less, and spent a great deal of her time in the seclusion of a wardrobe. Don always accompanied the children out of doors, and indoors would sit solemnly and watch them play together. But now Ronald and Mabel had found each other they did not care for other playfellows.

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CHAPTER VII.

HE WOULD BE A SOLDIER.

'WHAT vor be thee a-starin' at them sojers, boy, daft like? Look sharp, an' drive that there porker out o' the ditch.'

Old Jones was shouting at Joe as he drove the pigs along the road towards the market town. But Joe, whom he had hired for the day to help him, heeded him not. He leant, in his old smock frock and muddy gaiters, flattening his face against the railings round the barrack yard, gazing at 'them sojers.' The bright autumn sun glanced down on red uniforms and flashing bayonets, and the shrill fife and the roll of the drum drowned in Joe's ears the grunting of the pigs.

When market was over and the two, unaccompanied by the snorting herd, took their way home again, the bright bugle-call echoed in Joe's ears.

'Jonas,' quoth he, as the two crunched over the browning fern towards the farm, 'Jonas, is it hard to get to be a sojer?'.

Old Jonas shook his head, and wiped his horny knuckles across his eyes. 'Too aisy by far, lad. Our Bill weren't no more nor a head taller than you when he went and 'listed the day after the moss fair.'

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'But I've heard tell as how he wur killed in victory, Jonas!'

'That wur poor comfort to his mother and me, as never so much as set eyes on him in his red coat!' grumbled Jonas.

Joe did not reply. In his own mind he thought a victory better fun than pig-driving, or, in fact, farm work of any kind. He was delighted therefore when the keeper came down to his father's cottage that evening, as Joe sat eating his supper, with the inquiry if Joe could be spared to join the beaters in the morning, for the squire had got a party coming to shoot the big wood.

'Spared?' replied the farmer, 'I should think so! Anything rather than do a hand's turn o' work, the lazy rascal. Carter's tried him with the 'osses, and shepherd with the sheep, and now old Jonas with the pigs. But he don't take to naught kindly like.'

Now the woodcock would have been very thankful to have got the message Joe got about the shoot of the big wood. There had been a slight frost the night before, which had brought a good many leaves off the trees, and had heralded the approach of winter. The woodcock began to be sorry he had not flown southwards with a party of his relations who had started on their journey a week before. But, beguiled by warm sunshine, and by an abundance of worms as well as of small beetles, he had lingered late that year in the big wood, already golden with autumn tints. But he

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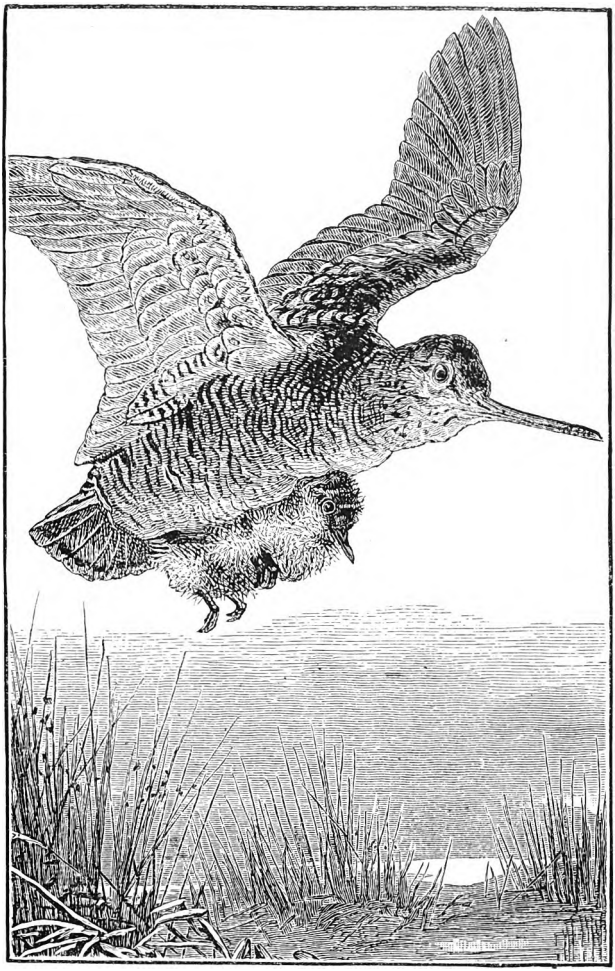

WOODCOCKS.

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was just sorry when pop, pop, pop, in the still autumn morning, sounded the guns of the shooting party. The cries and the blows of the beaters came nearer and nearer. Startled hares and rabbits scuttled through the covert, and pheasants rose with a whir. In the thickest part of the wood sat our mottled brown friend, till he could bear it no longer, and then he took wing noiselessly.

'Mark woodcock!'

The voice was from the little beater, Joe.

The captain raised his gun and fired. The woodcock dashed away across the green ride like a hawk, unharmed, but a cry of pain went up from among the beaters. There, down in the fern, fell Joe, covered with blood. They put him on a hurdle and carried him home, and set him down in his father's kitchen, whilst his mother covered her face with her apron and shrieked that he was killed. They brought father in from work, and a groom rode over to the town for a doctor. When the latter arrived he pronounced Joe to be badly peppered with shot, and not seriously hurt.

Next day, when he was sitting up in the arm-chair all plastered and bandaged, a woeful sight, came a knock at the door. His mother, up to her elbows in soap-suds, went to open it, and there stood the captain. In he came, and seemed almost to fill up the little kitchen.

'Well, how's the boy doing?' he asked cheerily.

'Nicely, sir, thank you, though he ain't much to look at.'

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The captain laughed. 'No, indeed, poor boy; his beauty's spoilt for the time being. But I dare-say this will go towards bringing it back, eh? and he held out a bright half-sovereign.

Mother gasped. It was nearly a week of father's wages. But Joe did not hold out his hand.

'Thank you kindly, sir, but——'

'But what? Speak out, my lad. Anything I can do for you, after this unfortunate business, I'll be glad to, I'm sure.'

Thus encouraged, Joe grew bold.

'Begging your pardon, sir, but they told me as you was a sojer, barrin' the red coat.'

'Yes: I don't shoot woodcock in my red coat. Well?'

'Please, sir, I wants terrible to be a sojer!'

Mother gave a little scream.

'Oh! lawk-a-mussy! Who'd 'a thought it?'

But the captain clapped Joe on the back till his wounds hurt, and cried,—

'And so you shall, my lad! Well done! I tell you what, I'll enlist you in my own regiment as a drummer-boy!'

And thus it was that as the woodcock went south, winging its flight over land and sea, away to warmer countries, Joe shortly followed him (but clad in a drummer-boy's red coat and epaulettes) across the sea to India.

* * * * *

The soldiers' hospital at Naini Tal, in the Hima-

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layas, stood on the steep mountain side among the ilexes and the rhododendrons. All the winter long it was deserted, and a pair of titmice had the place to themselves. When the snow wrapped the mountains in a soft mantle, times were hard for the birds. But they found flies and other insects hidden snugly away in the dry grass with which the outhouses were thatched. Then in the spring, when the crimson blossoms of the rhododendron dyed the hillsides crimson, Mrs. Tit began to build a nest. She chose a chink in a gnarled old ilex which overhung the hospital verandah. Her pert little crested head, with its black topknot, might have been seen peeping out of the hole as she sat on her eggs.

Just at the time when these were hatched there was a great commotion in the hospital. The doors were thrown open, the rooms swept out, and there was much bustle in the verandah. Then the invalids arrived—some almost well, and able to walk up the steep mountain road ; some white and wan, carried in litters on coolies' shoulders ; but one and all were fleeing from the furnace-like blasts that made life well-nigh unbearable in the plains below.

The tits became very anxious. All this unwonted bustle alarmed them very much ; but, burdened as Mrs. Tit was by the care of a young family, they could not think of leaving the ilex. Nevertheless, Mr. Tit went out in fear and trembling on his foraging expeditions. One day he

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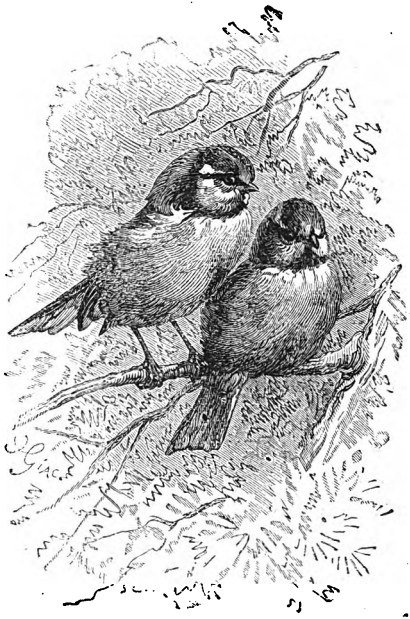
brought back such a feast—a large piece of meat, as big as he could carry.

'My dear, wherever did you pick up that?' asked his little wife.

'Over there in the verandah,' he replied.



TOMTITS.

'There's a sick boy lies there on his bed in the verandah when it is warm, and he cannot eat his dinner, and throws the pieces to the birds.'

'How did you manage to dodge the crows, though?' asked Mrs. Tit.

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'Ah! that would not have been easy,' he answered; 'but the boy is kind to me; he frightens the crows away, and lets me get the bits.'

Thus every morning Mr. Tit might have been seen strutting perkily about in the verandah near Joe's bed. For Joe it was—pale and worn with fever, his ruddy English colour gone from the terrible heat of the Indian climate—Joe, the shadow of his former self.

One day came a storm, driving down with howling wind and rain over the mountains from the far snowy range high above. It was the last effort of winter before he relaxed his hold on the lower green hillsides. It shook the tits all night long in their ilex tree, and it laid poor Joe once more tossing in fever. And when the morning dawned, it was found some one else had also suffered. The woodcock, driven down by the storm from the higher mountains, where he had been wintering, lay exhausted, and almost dead, under the ilex.

The tits were very much perturbed about the invalid. It was their hopping and chirping round him which first attracted Joe's attention. For he was feeling a little better, and had been carried out into the verandah. By him was sitting the chaplain, who had been talking to the sick boy, reading a chapter out of the Bible to him, and reminding him of the lessons he had learnt in the Sunday school so far away at home.

'Ah, sir,' Joe had been saying, 'I didn't give so

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much heed to what teacher told me about the love of Jesus when I was well and strong, and had my father and mother and home. But it all come back to me, sir, when I hears you. Say it again, sir, do.'

'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

'Yes, them *is* kind words! Seems likes as if when you ain't got nothink else, Jesus comes and fills up all you miss. I wish I'd attended more to teacher, and heard more about Him, and prayed better. It's not too late now, be it, sir?'

'It's never too late to come to Christ,' said the clergyman. 'He is always willing to receive; He sends no sinner empty away. "Come unto Me," He says, "and I will give you rest."'

'Ay, an' He *will*,' murmured Joe, softly. And then there was a little silence, only the tits chattering and chirping under the ilex.

'What a noise they are making!' said the chaplain, and he crossed over to see, returning with the weary, panting bird in his hand.

'Why, if it ain't a woodcock!' said Joe, stroking feebly the rich brown plumage. 'It 'minds me of home—and the big wood—and the beating; I see it all. Put it away safe somewhere; maybe it'll come round presently—and it'll get back to England—which is more nor ever I shall. But I be goin' home, sir, goin' home. "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest——"'

* * * * *

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When the early spring dawn gleamed on the snowy range of the Himalayas, and gradually lighted up the valleys and the forest slopes, waking the titmice in their ilex tree, the woodcock was not to be seen. He had recovered himself and sped on his flight.

But, though they watched all day for their usual morsels, Joe never came into the verandah to feed the little birds. But at evening a little procession, composed of soldiers and the captain, followed the drummer-boy's coffin, covered with the Union Jack, to its last resting-place in the little cemetery among the everlasting hills. Little Joe had found rest.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRATEFUL MONKEY.

A NEW pet! and Frank had so many already! There were the big Scotch deerhound Oscar, the black spaniel Rose, the white fox-terrier Nip, and the Chinese pug Chang! So much for the dogs. Frank did not know which he loved most. Then there were three parrots hanging up in cages in the verandah; two showy and shrieking, and the third smaller and quieter, with a green body and a head like a ripe plum. A cageful of doves cooed all day, and there was an aviary full of all sorts of little birds, such as yellow-crested weaver birds, green budgiars, and brown bulbuls. Two tall white stork-like paddy-birds stalked solemnly about in the wired-in end of the verandah, and a mina by the drawing-room door imitated every one in a most humanlike voice. So much for the birds! There was a beautiful spotted deer tethered out in the garden, and a mite of a pony in the stable. What could a little boy possibly want more?

Frank was living in India, in a large, dim house, with a deep shady verandah running all round it, that made an excellent play-place for Frank, and a

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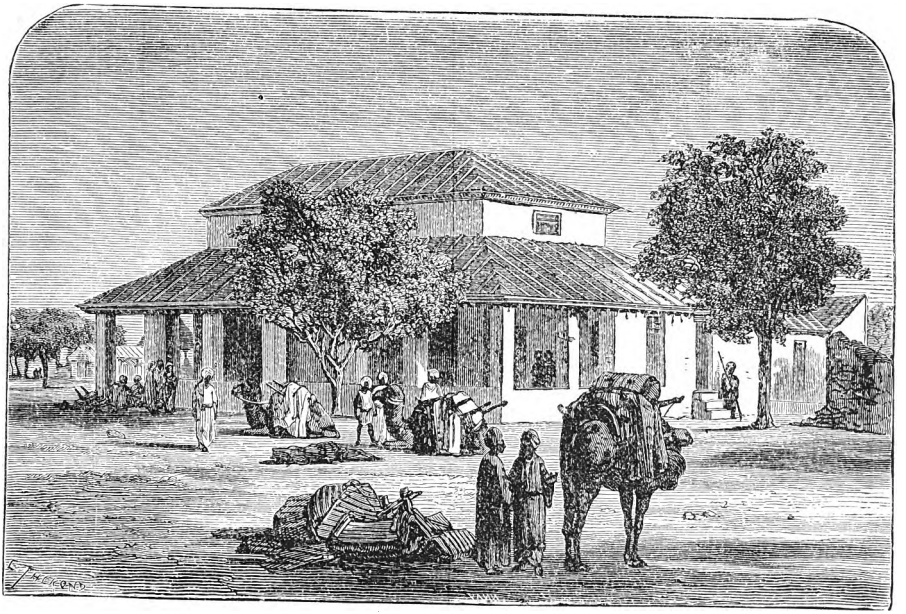

AN INDIAN HOUSE.

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nice abode for his pets. Then there were plenty of servants, never hurried, never busy, always at hand to look after them.

But one afternoon, when the sun was low and the breeze cool, Frank went out with his parents for a drive, away beyond the white thatched bungalows like that he lived in, and down straight, dusty, tree-bordered roads to the native town. Here the streets were narrow and stifling, the houses had carved balconies and arches, and were painted gaily. On the ground-floor were rows of tiny shops open to the street, where the merchants sat cross-legged on the floor, along with their wares. An endless stream of dusky natives filled the street, and they had constantly to be shouted at to get them out of the way. They were clad in bright-coloured garments, and chattered as they went along, carrying bundles on the head, or a child astride on their hip. Occasionally a jingling country cart with gay canopy and a tiny pony came clattering along, or the way would be blocked by a heavily laden waggon creeping along, drawn by two patient bullocks.

Looking down on this gay and noisy scene from the flat roofs above, were the other inhabitants of the bazaar, as the shop part of the town is called. They were brown and dusky too, and hardly less clothed than some of the natives. But they were quite as much at home, and no one would have dared to turn them out. They were free to steal from the grainseller's baskets on the shop-board

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below, to pick a bit from the noonday meal which was being cooked in the inner courtyard, or even to make a sudden pounce on some passer-by,

carrying home a plaintain leaf full of butter. For were they not the semi-sacred fellow-citizens of the townsfolk, the monkeys?

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Outside the city Frank was taken to see the monkey-grove, a copse of mango-trees specially reserved for them. Here they literally swarmed, familiar and impudent, running about the trees and road, and clamouring for food from the old priest who lived in a mud-hut under the trees, and spent his life caring for them. There were big, old grandfather-monkeys, with white hair and beards; there were fierce-looking brown father-monkeys, who quarrelled and fought; there were the mothers scampering about the trees, with their little ones holding on round their bodies, or sitting on their back—such dear little ones, with tiny baby faces and the prettiest hands and feet.

Frank went home longing for a little monkey for a pet. One of the servants brought him one from the bazaar. It was quite small, with a thick brown coat, a long tail, and bright sharp eyes. The new arrival was provided with a collar and a long chain, which was fastened to the trunk of a shady tree, at the foot of which a box was placed for a kennel. It sat there looking so pitiful and demure, and crying gently, but alas! Frank soon discovered it was not really tame at all. It had never been used to white people, and was dreadfully frightened at them. It would scamper up its tree if any one came by, and sit there spitting and snarling and making ugly faces. Then, after a while, it got very mischievous. It would hide behind the box, and when any one came unsuspectingly down the garden, past the tree, would pounce

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out upon them and tear their clothes. Frank was rather alarmed by his new pet, and went back to his former friends the dogs and the small parrot. Master Jacko was left entirely to the care of the servant who looked after the animals, and spent his time trying to get into mischief, and wishing himself free from that horrid chain, and back again at liberty in the bazaar.

One day he had a great fright. Three gentlemen on horseback rode up to the house, and stood under the tree where Master Jacko's box was, talking to Frank's father. Jacko looked down upon them from among the leaves. Suddenly something startled one of the horses, who began to caper and kick about in a manner very alarming to the monkey. He immediately scuttled down the tree and into the box as fast as his little feet could carry him, and then banging to the little sliding door, felt himself safe once more from the disturbance.

But worse happened to him one morning, when Frank was standing in the verandah waiting for the groom to bring round the pony for a ride. Though the sun had not long been up, and little children in England were still in bed, it was Frank's usual time for riding, for the air was cool and pleasant, and in the distance Frank could hear the sound of the band of the regiment playing as they marched to parade.

Suddenly there were queer sounds nearer home, proceeding from the monkey's tree — a pitiful

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spluttering and choking and coughing and screeching. Frank went nearer and looked. What did he see?

The poor little animal had been up to some of his usual tricks, racing round and round his tree, and then climbing up and dangling from a branch, till he had wound his chain tightly in an inextricable tangle, and was hanging there half-strangled.

There was no one near to help. Frank was half afraid of the poor little creature; but could he let him be hanged and not help him? So he set to work to try and release him. With great difficulty Frank undid some of the knots and turns of the chains, the monkey, all the while, quite understanding what he was after, and holding on with one hand to the branch, while with the other he held the collar and prevented it pressing on his throat and choking him. It was really quite pretty to see him.

When, after some time, Frank at last had managed to disentangle him, and the monkey felt free once more, he did not, however, attempt to fly at his deliverer, as he had been wont to do. No, even a monkey can be grateful. He tore once or twice round the tree, uttering short cries of joy, and then, with a sudden spring, jumped on Frank's shoulder, and squatted down there quite quietly, scratching his head with his tiny hand.

Ever after that Frank and the monkey became great friends and companions. Gradually he grew so tame that his chain was no longer needed, and he danced about the house after his little master,

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and fed out of his hand. Great was Frank's delight when at last he would go for a ride with him, perched on his shoulder and taking every now and then a scamper along the road. But he never made any attempt to go back to his native bazaar.

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CHAPTER IX.

A BRAVE DOG'S DEED.

IT was a great delight and treat to us when mother told us that she had asked Lionel and Cyril Mackenzie to come and spend the day with us.

Guy and I looked at each other when we heard this. 'It will be jolly! We can play, you know what.'

And Guy nodded his head and looked mysterious. We had a great game in our heads. But then mother added,—

'And I have asked the little Ferrars, too, Toto and Nina. Their mother is very ill with fever, and will be glad to get them out of the house, poor things!'

Guy and I looked at each other with faces of disgust.

'That will just spoil everything. Such a pair of babies.'

Mother, who was just leaving the room, turned upon us with a grave face of reproof.

'I don't like to hear my little men speak so selfishly and unkindly,' said she. 'The little Ferrars are younger than you, and delicate

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children, and you know how ill their poor mother is, and their father killed in the Burmah war, last spring. They are going home to England as soon as Mrs. Ferrars is well enough, so this is perhaps the last chance you may have of being kind to them.'

We both felt very uncomfortable. We always do when mother looks and speaks to us like this.

We went into the verandah, our usual play-place. All Indian houses—bungalows, they are called—have deep, dim verandahs round them, to keep the heat and the glare out of the rooms, and ours was a very nice one, with cool, paved floor, and pretty creepers and plants growing in it.

'I don't believe there's arms enough for the little Ferrars,' muttered Guy, rummaging in a *go-down*, or store-room, at the corner of the house.

'No; there are only the two helmets, and the sword, and two sticks, one for a lance.'

'They'll have to be the band, if Lionel and Cyril will let them.'

'Yes, that will do; they're much too small to drill. Ask the General: aren't they, Chow-chow?'

Chow-chow, as usual not very far off from where we were, did not answer, and for the best of reasons —because he could not.

General Chow-chow was a dog.

We had made him the general in our army game, because we could not induce him to keep in rank or in step with us. A general need not do anything of the kind. He has only to look wise

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and give orders to the colonel, and Lionel Mackenzie, who was the colonel, repeated what he called General Chow-chow's orders to us.

Chow-chow was lying flat on the ground in the verandah, panting, for it was very hot, being the middle of the day. He would have liked a nap, but the flies gave him no chance of one. As fast as he shook one off his nose, it settled on his eyelid, on his ear, and so on, all round again.

Chow-chow had a lovely white silky coat, washed and combed every morning by the *mehter*, the particular servant in India who looks after the dogs and the poultry. Chow was very spruce and smart indeed, and looked quite a gentleman—fit, indeed, to be a general officer.

And now I daresay you wonder why he was called Chow-chow—a funny name for a dog.

When any of you have come down to dessert at a dinner-party, or about Christmas time, have you ever been given a very nice, hot, sugary kind of sticky sweetmeat out of a Chinese jar? Well, the name of that is Chow-chow.

And we called our dear little fluffy friend Chow-chow, because he came from China and *was good to eat.*

Yes, would you believe it? Those horrid, cruel Chinese keep these dear, pretty little dogs on purpose to make puppy-dog pie of.

Our Chow had had a very narrow escape of the same sad fate. But father had picked him up in China and brought him back to India to be our pet

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instead. All the same, we sometimes said for a joke we loved him so much we could eat him.

Lionel and Cyril came and brought the band—a penny whistle, a trumpet that had been walked on, and would only blow if you held it in a certain way, and two drums, one with a hole in it. After dinner we all set to work in real earnest with our game, and all dressed up in readiness.

Nina and Toto, who were very quiet, shy children, stood in the background, while we all quarrelled as to who should be which and wear what. Every one wanted to be the colonel and ride the old rocking-horse. It was only General Chow-chow's position that nobody wanted to take.

Guy looked at our smallest visitors, and his conscience pricked him rather.

'I say, Lionel, let the two babies be some of our band?'

'Oh no!' replied Cyril; 'I must be the drummer if Lionel's colonel. The drum-major's always a fat man, you know, the fattest in the whole regiment.'

'Let them be spectators,' said Lionel. 'We must have some spectators. There are always some when the regiment is on parade.'

So the two little Ferrars were left out of the game altogether. Nina, who had brought her dolls, said she would 'tend she was an ayah bringing her babies to see the soldiers; but Toto, who did not like being called a baby, looked very sulky, and as if he were going to cry.

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Then the review began. The general sat looking as solemn and knowing as possible, barking an order every now and then, when the band made a great noise. Cyril, who was rather greedy, was drum-major, and had got the sword, too. It was not quite fair, we said. But Cyril was the biggest of us, and he generally got his own way.

The band made a fine noise. You could hardly hear the colonel speak; but his rocking-horse he pushed along very well indeed down the verandah, round the corner by the *go-down*, past the kitchen, where the servants all squatted with their pipes, and shouted as the army passed.

'Let's go down to the stables and show my pony the regiment,' said Guy; and we stamped, and tootled, and shoved down the drive, away towards the servants' houses and the stables.

It took a long time for the colonel to get his horse there, and a long time to get it back, for we were rather tired of blowing and stamping and drubbing. It was quite dusk—the Indian twilight is so short—when we came back to our corner in the verandah. Mother and the ayah were waiting.

'Your tea is ready, children. Where are Nina and Toto?'

We looked round; they were nowhere to be seen.

'Chow-chow's gone too,' said some one.

'Stand easy! dismiss!' shouted Colonel Lionel; and he dismounted, and stowed away his charger into a corner.

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'We must find these children,' said mother anxiously. 'Soldiers, you must skirmish for them. Why did you not look after them, and play with them?'

We all turned very red. We had forgotten all about our poor little spectators. Then we set to work, and hunted and shouted in right good earnest, all through the now dark garden.

'Bow! wow! wow!' That was General Chow-chow's voice. It sounded from the corner where the well was—an open, unprotected well, like all Indian wells, and so deep.

Mother turned white, and ran. We did not know mother could run so fast; we had never seen her do so before.

Chow-chow was standing looking down into the well and barking. He saw something down the deep dark well.

'Nina! Nina!—Toto! Toto!' called mother in an agonized voice.

A faint cry from ever so deep down, and then the servants came with ropes and buckets and a ladder.

They brought Nina up first, all dripping except her head, for she had clung to a bush which grew out of the wall. Toto came next, fast asleep, and all wet. It was a long time before he came up. The doctor had to come and wake him, and he was ill for a long while.

Nina's doll they never got up at all. She was the first to fall in, we found. Then Toto tried to

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pick her out and fell in; and then Nina tried to pick Toto out, and she fell in, too.

Mother looked very grave, and had tears in her eyes when she came to hear us say our prayers that night.

'You must ask to be forgiven for your selfishness towards poor Nina and Toto,' said she; 'owing to you they have been nearly drowned. You thought this afternoon entirely of your own amusement, and not of Nina and Toto's. Think how grieved our gentle, loving Saviour, Who, when He was on earth, spent His life in doing good to others, must be with the unkindness He has seen in you to-day; for, recollect, He *always* sees you, at play, indoors and out, even though *I* may not.'

'I'm very sorry,' stammered Guy, with a sob.

'And so am I,' I added. 'We soldiers didn't do our duty, as father says soldiers always should. General Chow-chow did, though. Mother, I *am* sorry.'

'And what must people do when they are sorry?' asked mother.

'Ask to get forgiven,' said Guy.

'Yes, you ask to be forgiven, and also for, in the future, God's help to cure you of your faults, to try to be *His* soldiers (as you are so fond of playing at soldiers), to fight against real enemies, unkindness, selfishness, and other sins, and to do always what will please Christ, our great Captain.'

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CHAPTER X.

HOW NUBBI BUX TRICKED THE MONKEYS.

THERE was a good deal going on one day in a certain house, in a certain town, at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains. There was a going and a coming of heads of families, a hurrying to and fro of servants and dependants. There were solemn processions by daylight and by torchlight of chanting crowds, following a little boy, mounted on a pony with the tail dyed red. There was an endless beating of drums called 'tom-toms,' and feasting every evening by torchlight in the court-yard of the house. There were performances of dancing girls, dancing slow, swaying dances, very unlike our quick romping polkas.

And the hero, the object of all this fuss, was the little boy Krishen Das, who was about twelve years old.

Now very few English children who read this would guess what was going to happen to him.

It was not his birthday; and if it were, the Hindoos do not keep birthdays with parties, as we do. It was not that he had come into his property. No, his father was yet alive, and Krishen Das was still treated as a little boy, and went to school with the other little boys of the town, under the peepul

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tree, where they all learnt to read together, in a sing-song tone of voice, swaying their bodies to and fro in unison.

No, something was being done to Krishen Das, which is never done to English boys of twelve years old.

He was being married.

And who was the bride?

That was more than Krishen Das could say, for he had never seen her. The village match-maker and the children's parents had arranged the marriage, and little Nashiban was still hidden away in the women's apartments of her father's house, where her whole life of eight years had been spent. It was not till the last two or three days of the wedding festivities that she would be brought out and shown to her future husband.

Krishen Das' father was a well-to-do man, and anxious to have a great marriage entertainment for his son, and to outvie his neighbours. In England it is chiefly the bride's fine new clothes that we think about at the wedding. No one troubles their heads as to the bridegroom's dress. But in India it is different. The little bridegroom plays quite as important a part in the whole affair as the bride. *His* clothes were a matter of much consideration.

For some days Hindoo tailors sat cross-legged at work in the verandah, holding gay-coloured stuffs with their left toes, while they embroidered them with their hands. And poor little Krishen

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Das was dressed and undressed, fitted and refitted so often, that he was heartily tired of the whole business, and wished most sincerely he could be free to go and play in the dust, outside the town, with his school-fellows, clad only in the twist of dirty linen which formed his habitual attire.

In an Indian town, in the streets of shops called the bazaar, most of the vendors sell only one thing. There is a row of sweetmeat sellers, of corn-dealers, of cloth-merchants, of shoe-sellers, of pipe-makers. So, when the wedding was being prepared for, the court-yard of Krishen Das' house was besieged every day with vendors and pedlars of all kinds; shoemakers with boxes full of queer-pointed embroidered shoes, with the toes curled backwards; and cloth-merchants exhibiting yards of gay-coloured stuffs.

Now Nubbi Bux was a coolie, none too wise or too clever. His master, a dealer in the little gay caps the Hindoos wear almost as much as turbans, hearing of Krishen Das' marriage preparations, ordered Nubbi Bux to carry two boxes of caps up to the house for the young bridegroom's inspection.

Nubbi Bux, who never cared much about fatiguing himself, shouldered his load somewhat unwillingly. His master gave him a kick and drove him off on his way. He was afraid that other cap-dealers would be beforehand with him, and that Krishen Das would be provided with headgear ere Nubbi Bux arrived.

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It was very hot, and it was the middle of the day. Though clad only in one cotton garment, and with no socks on his bare brown legs, our friend felt the heat very much indeed. When he had reached a group of peepul trees, just outside the bazaar, and made sure that his master was not watching him, he decided within himself that it was much too hot to go on up to the other end of the town, toiling under this heavy load, but that a nap would be more to the purpose.

So he removed his heavy turban and wiped his brow. Then, to avoid the sun striking down upon his head, he thought there would be no harm in borrowing, for the time, one of the articles of head-gear out of the box.

He tried on several. Some were too large, others too small. At last he found one to suit him, and, sheltered by the broad branches, Nubbi Bux was soon in the Land of Nod.

'No use to hurry up to Krishen Das' house this time of day,' he muttered to himself, 'for every one would be enjoying their noontide nap.'

But Nubbi Bux, unknown to himself, was being watched in his proceedings, by many pairs of bright eyes, very much awake. They were peering down upon him from the branches of the old peepul tree, which was their head-quarters. There was a waving of dozens of tails, a cocking of dozens of heads, but not a sound was to be heard.

No sooner, however, did the inhabitants of the peepul tree perceive that the dustman had indeed

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come to the sleeper in the dust below, than there suddenly began a screeching, a chattering, a bounding, a scampering, which would assuredly have awakened Nubbi Bux had he not effectually defended himself by drawing his borrowed cap well over his ears.

Every one knows how inquisitive monkeys are, and every single one of them was dying to know what was in Nubbi Bux's box. Quick as lightning three of them tore the lid open, and, hurrying their heads and forepaws in the recesses of the parcel, pounced upon its contents, and flung them right and left. Sleeky, a pretty lady monkey, who was rather vain, promptly tried on a cap to see how it became her, and her example was instantly followed by the whole crowd. There was a fighting, a quarrelling, a scratching and a screeching. The little baby monkeys, too small to jump from the branches, whined and cried because they had not got a cap. Their elders below wrangled and fought. Snarly and Snappy, two of the biggest and fiercest monkeys in the grove, had a tremendous tussle for one beautiful red and green cap they both coveted. Then Sneaky, who was a sly fellow, came up behind, and clutched it off Snappy's head just as he had got Snarly on the ground, and was pummelling him. Sleeky *would* put on a cap too small for her, and could not get it off again. Snorty, a greedy monkey, seized no fewer than three caps, and put them all on at once, to the disgust of Snarly, who told him so in angry notes.

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Snappy went after Sneaky, who had just torn off with his cap. He came up with him just at the trunk of the tree, close to the spot which Nubbi Bux had chosen for his couch.

This latter was awakened by a screech from Sneaky, like a railway whistle, close to his ear. He started up, and imagine his horror at the sight he beheld! From every branch above him grinned a monkey, and on nearly every monkey's head was stuck a beautiful new cap, green, scarlet, pale blue, trimmed with gold and silver, making bright spots among the green leaves and the brown fur coats. On the ground below lay the empty box.

Poor Nubbi Bux tore his beard in despair. He scolded himself for having gone to sleep; he scolded the monkeys for their theft. He pictured to himself his master's anger. He was still suffering from that parting kick, and he knew he should be suffering still more by evening from the good thrashing he would inevitably receive. He pictured to himself Krishen Das waiting for his supply of fine wedding caps, the best the town could produce, and waiting in vain, for they adorned the heads of these wicked, jabbering, grinning monkeys.

Nubbi Bux was at his wits' end what to do. He stood up vacantly and scratched his head in bewilderment.

Snappy and Snarly, looking at him from above, followed his example—monkeys are great mimics—and did the same.

Nubbi Bux scratched his black head once more,

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as if to get some fresh idea. Up above he was amused to see the monkeys imitate him, nearly all of them this time.

Then an inspiration seized Nubbi. Standing a little way off the tree, in full view of the whole pack of thieves, he seized his own cap from his head and dashed it to the ground.

In an instant, in less time than it takes to tell, all the monkeys did the same. Down came all the caps, green, scarlet, pale blue, embroidered in gold and silver. It was a race among the little creatures who should throw down theirs the fastest. Sleeky stuck to hers the last of all. It was her own fault in being so vain as to want to wear one too small for her. Snorty had to help her to get it off, and nearly pulled her head off with it.

You may imagine that Nubbi Bux, delighted with the success of his little trick, lost not an instant in packing up his recovered wares safely, and hurrying on with them to his destination, vowing to himself, after this narrow escape, never to go to sleep again when sent upon an errand.

A few days after, in the cool of the evening, Krishen Das started on a procession along the narrow streets, accompanied by his father and Nashiban's father, to bring home his little bride. He rode on his gaily-caparisoned pony, followed by a shouting crowd and the beating drums. Nashiban was brought out of her father's house, carried in a chair covered round with curtains, and with a veil thrown over her. Thus they went to

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the idol temple, where the priest would preach them a sermon, and tie their hands together with flowers, while Krishen Das, instead of giving his bride a ring, would tie a gold brooch round her neck.

And, from the flat roofs of the houses, as the procession wended its way through the town, uninvited wedding guests looked down upon it. These were no other than the monkeys of the peepul tree, on their evening prowl among the houses for food.

I wonder whether they recognised in the caps which the bridegroom and his father wore some of the gay headgear which they had tried on themselves.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY OF A FAITHFUL SHEEP.

THERE was nothing of the look of an English sheep about the hero of this little tale. Billy was a markhoor, one of the several species of wild sheep to be found in the Himalayas. He was brown and shaggy, with long hair, large, mild dark eyes, a tuft of black hair under his chin, and a pair of spiral horns, which made him look something like a goat.

Billy had been born far up among the mountains, and had roamed from babyhood amid the wildest precipices, and the most inaccessible crags, on the edge of the line of eternal snow, some fifteen thousand feet above the sea. In leaping frightful chasms and browsing on giddy slopes, he had learnt how to become as nimble and sure-footed as an antelope. He would have scorned any relationship to a sleepy woolly English sheep, grazing quietly in a green meadow, and huddling in a flock at the bark of a dog.

Billy was very young when he was caught by the *shikari*, or huntsman, of an English officer who was on a shooting trip in the mountains. The *shikari* tied a rope round Billy's neck—his horns

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had not then even begun to sprout—and led him to his master. He was such a captivating little beast that General Smith made a pet of him. Billy soon repaid his kindness by becoming very tame, and accustoming himself to camp life in the hills. When the master's tent was struck, and the long line of laden coolies and servants set off along narrow mountain paths and up steep slopes, Billy followed in the procession quite as meekly as Nip the terrier or his master's pony. He never made the least attempt to regain his freedom and his native crags. Billy had evidently made up his mind that plenty of good food and petting were preferable to a precarious subsistence along with the rest of the herd of markhoor.

But when General Smith's shooting trip was over and he returned once more to his command at Guramabad, and Billy with him, the latter began rather to regret the Himalayas. No cool breezes and heights, no crags, no precipices!

The roof of General Smith's house abutted on a narrow stone parapet. Here Billy would lie asleep in the sun, his legs dangling over the edge, making believe, as it were, that he was lying on the brink of a mountain precipice. And, when his master whistled, Billy, who was as obedient as he was sensible, would open his eyes, and throwing himself over the edge of the parapet, some twenty feet from the ground, alight on his feet safely at his master's side. What an acrobatic sheep!

But a still greater change of life was in store for

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Billy. General Smith was ordered to England, and determined to take his faithful pet with him. Poor Billy! good-bye for ever to his snowy Himalayas, to his native land! He embarked on board the steamer with his master, and was duly installed in a sort of pen, next door to the ship's cow, and under a row of parrots in cages, which were being brought home. But if you fancy that Billy was going tamely to submit to imprisonment and to separation from his master you are much mistaken. When the ship's officers saw how tame and gentle he was—in spite of his horns, now grown so large as to be out of all proportion to his size, and curving grandly—they let him free, and Billy's antics amused all the crew and passengers for the rest of the voyage.

The general, Billy found, passed the greater part of the day sitting in his chair reading and smoking. But such inactivity was not to Billy's mind. The ship, an old-fashioned paddle steamer, was too small to admit of much running about; there was no scope for Billy's leaps; so he invented a new game, a kind of playing at the treadmill, which amused him for hours together. He jumped on to one of the boards of the paddle-wheels, and as it went round sprang dexterously into the next, to avoid being plunged into the water. Thus he went on jumping and never missing his footing, though it seemed as if every lurch of the vessel must throw him into the sea.

On arriving in London, General Smith found

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poor Billy a somewhat inconvenient pet. A tame sheep in a small town-house is rather out of place. But there was a home open to Billy, a kind of splendid captivity, where animals enjoy every luxury that heart can dream of, except liberty—I mean the Zoological Gardens. And there General Smith determined to deposit his pet. So he called a hansom cab, and got in. Then he snapped his fingers at Billy waiting on the pavement, and heigh, presto!—a bound and a leap, and in he was —the little sheep seated by his master's side, his horns curling above the doors!

Billy missed his master somewhat at the Zoo but the general paid his pet occasional visits. The keeper would open the gate, and the markhoor would run out to his master and follow him round the gardens like a dog.

But one day a sad surprise awaited General Smith. Billy came to meet him with one of his beautiful curved horns smashed. Billy had been fighting. He had been put into an enclosure next to another horned kind of goat. The two had rushed at each other, intent on a battle. The iron paling had intervened, and the accident to Billy's horns had been the result.

Later on worse followed. Poor Billy seemed destined to come to worse grief in English sheds and paddocks than any Himalayan precipices and chasms. One day he was put into the giraffe house, which, as any one will remember, is a very lofty building, made tall enough for its occupants'

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long necks. Billy tried to 'throw a lep,' as the Irish people say, on to the sill of a small window very high up. He gained it and made good his footing, but the glass played him false. Crash! crash! and down came Billy through the window into the paved yard below. When he was found, his leg was broken by the fall.

They set his leg and patched him up, but poor Billy was never quite himself again after this accident. The enforced inactivity while his leg was mending preyed upon his spirits. One has to keep *so* still with a broken leg, no bounding, no high jumps! The accident left a limp behind, and perhaps Billy felt the spring was gone out of him. Animals like him, used to liberty, do not live long in confinement. The general sailed away to India, and when he returned a year later, Billy's place in the Zoological Gardens knew him no more.

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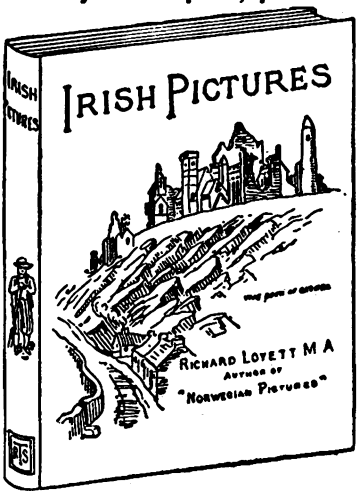

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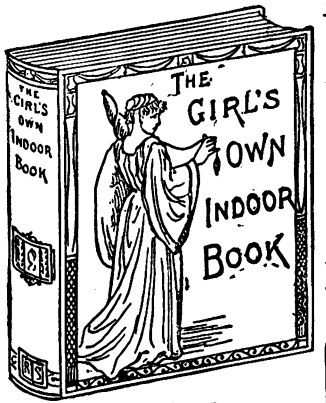

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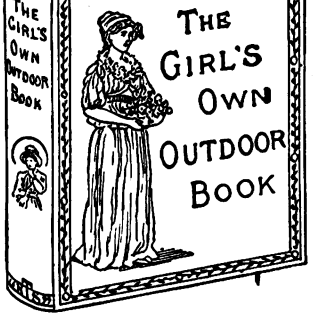

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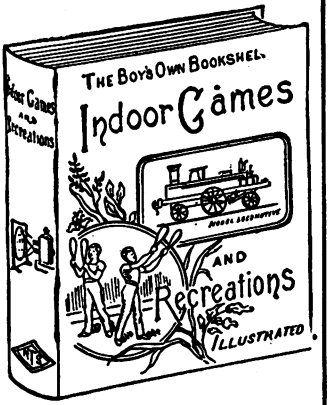

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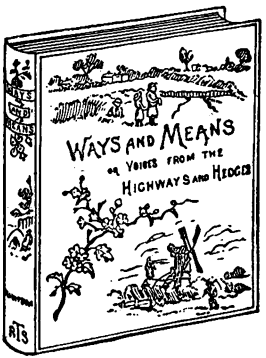

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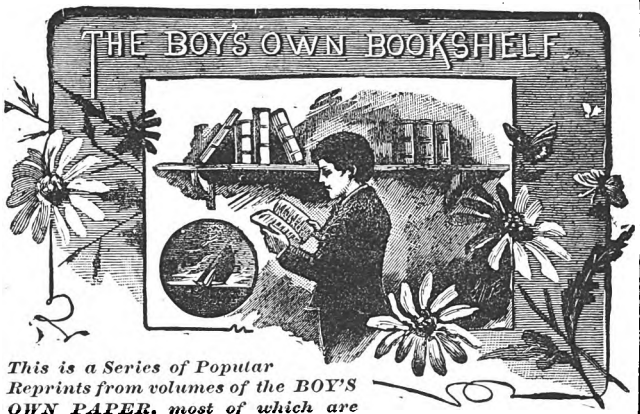

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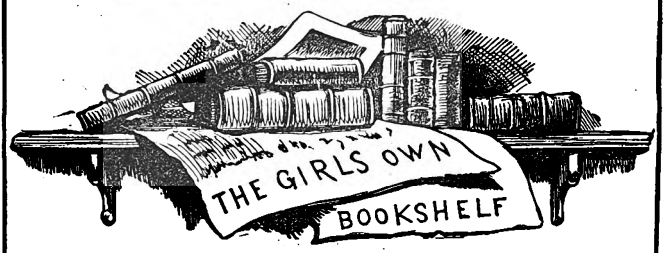

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